

**The International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (CP):
Students' Experiences, Post-secondary Destinations and Outcomes**

Final Report

by

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme (CP) combines academic Diploma Programme subjects with an accredited careers-related study and four core components to offer a pathway to further or higher education, apprenticeships or employment. It integrates academic and practical learning in a rigorous way and aims to develop skills, knowledge and competencies required for lifelong learning.

The Institute of Employment Research at the University of Warwick was commissioned to:

- Explore the experiences of students who completed the CP in 2014;
- Document the post-secondary destinations of CP students;
- Investigate the contribution of the CP to students' post-secondary outcomes.

All CP students who graduated in 2014 were invited to take part in a survey regarding their experiences during and after their CP studies. Of this group of 339 students, 62 completed the survey and fifteen also elected to take part in qualitative interviews. A further five students chose not to complete the survey but volunteered to take part in the qualitative interviews. Additionally, one employer and eight training and higher education institutions (HEIs) admissions officers were interviewed.

Students' experiences with the CP

Who entered the programme, and why did students choose to do the CP?

Most students entered the CP at age 16 to gain a secondary school qualification, with only few students entering as mature students (mainly in Finland). The main reasons students chose to embark on the CP were because they were interested in subjects offered by the school as part of the CP and because they wanted to get a head start on higher education courses and/or future occupations. Just under half of all students were recruited by teachers into the programme. Students said this had occurred when a teacher perceived a student as having a clear idea about his or her occupational pathway or when a teacher felt that the CP would provide a more fitting option than academically focused programmes offered by a school.

What kind of subjects and Career-related Study did students choose, and why did they choose these? What were students' experiences with the CP core (Approaches to Learning, Community and Service, Language Development, Reflective Project)?

The majority of students in our study studied two IB Diploma Programme (DP) subjects. Most frequently chosen subjects were "Business and Management (SL)" and "Language B (SL)." Subjects were selected on the basis of students' interests and to have consistency between their chosen DP subjects and the focus of their Career-related Study. Schools differed according to the breadth of DP subject choices they offered to students.

The majority of students undertook their Career-related Study in art and design, business or engineering. Many students undertook internships with an employer in

order to gain work experience. Most students enjoyed the “Approaches to Learning” (ATL) classes, although the implementation of ATL classes appeared to vary greatly amongst the schools attended by study participants. The Reflective Project was viewed by participants as a demanding task that would prepare students for higher education, further develop career clarity and allow students to combine personal interests with curricular requirements.

To what extent were students satisfied with the career advice they received from schools?

A high proportion of survey respondents (80 percent) were satisfied with the career guidance they received from schools. If they were critical, they complained about the lack of individual advice, the concentration towards higher education, and the neglect of alternative career paths and application skills for higher education or employment.

Whilst some students decided early upon a career (i.e., before embarking on the CP), other students were still unsure about the occupations they eventually wanted to enter. The CP was flexible to accommodate both kinds of students; it allowed some students to take their first steps on their chosen career paths, and it allowed others to try out different occupations that helped their careers decision-making.

How satisfied were students with selected aspects of the CP (information received before embarking on the CP; flexibility, organisation, teachers; content and workload; reputation of the CP) and the CP overall?

The majority of CP students were content with the reputation of the CP in their schools, the schools’ career-related resources and their access to learning resources. Some students, however, criticised unclear communication about course requirements and course organisation, and in some schools, there were problems with competition between CP and IB DP students. Many students acknowledged the innovative methods used for teaching the CP; however, some study participants would have appreciated a greater emphasis on rigorous tests in the CP.

With hindsight, the overall majority of students would have done the CP again. Those who would have embarked on a different qualification mentioned problems such as entering their first choice of higher education institution with the CP, school-related problems and changes to individual career plans.

Students’ post-secondary destinations

What did students do after leaving school with a CP certificate?

More than half of the survey respondents (53 percent) had entered higher education, and 21 percent were engaged in casual jobs in the second quarter of 2015. The remainder were employed in a job related to their career paths (8 percent), in apprenticeships or career-related training (3 participants), or unemployed (10 percent); 5 percent stated that they had done something else (e.g., compulsory military service or long-term holidays).

What kind of skills, knowledge and competencies had they acquired during their CPs?

For this report, we distinguished between cognitive competencies (knowledge), functional competencies (skills) and social competencies (behaviour). Many students commented how gains in cognitive competencies through the CP prepared them for higher education.

Most of the student study participants indicated that they had increased their functional competencies, such as language skills, skills for progression into higher education, skills for general employment and skills specific to industry-related employment. Regarding the latter, examples included engineering skills or skills needed in business. Additionally, one student and the employer we interviewed noted useful networking skills were a feature of the CP. Students also reported that they gained functional skills such as IT skills, time management skills, and organisation and research skills that will assist them to progress into higher education. Many students said that they acquired these skills during work on the Reflective Project.

Finally, the CP also impacted positively on students' social competencies. Various students explained how the CP had influenced personal attitudes and how they gained confidence. For instance, the Career-related Study had helped students to acquire a strong work ethic. Some students also described how they and their classmates gained teamworking skills through their Career-related Studies.

What were CP students' experiences with the application process to higher education?

In the main, students in our study were able to successfully use the CP to enter higher education. However, while the majority of students indicated that higher education admissions officers had understood the CP and accepted it as a secondary school qualification, many experienced problems in the application process. This included students having to provide additional information about the CP in the application process. A small number of students said that they could not enter higher education because their CP certificates were not accepted. More positively, others said that they took advantage of the reputation of the International Baccalaureate brand and/or used interview skills they had acquired during the CP when applying to HEIs.

What were students' experiences with higher education?

More than half of all CP students had entered higher education after secondary school. Most frequently mentioned reasons for entering higher education were related to future employment and career plans. The particular course of study was chosen because students felt they would enjoy the subjects offered in a course and would value the content of a course. In general, most students felt that they were well prepared for their higher education courses by the CP and reported coping well in their courses. Diploma subjects were regarded as especially helpful for higher education. Most students felt that knowledge gained from DP courses, together with

their research skills, had helped them in their current studies. Some students, nevertheless, were more critical and did not feel prepared by the CP.

What were students' experiences with employment?

At the time of the survey, only nine students in our study had entered skill appropriate employment at any time after finishing secondary school. The most common reason for accepting their current jobs was that it offered interesting work. Several of these participants reported that they used some of the skills they had gained during their CP studies, such as course specific and communication skills (including English language skills) in their new job.

Eleven percent of the student survey respondents indicated they had experienced unemployment after completing the CP. The main reason for their current unemployment was due to the lack of job vacancies. However, it is too early to evaluate these students' pathways.

CP's contribution to students' future pathways

With hindsight, just under three quarters of the survey respondents considered the time after the CP as successful, and most of this group said it had to do with the CP. More than half of all students were optimistic that the CP would have further positive implications for their future.

Ways in which students felt that the CP may contribute to their future pathways were:

- Using knowledge, skills and competencies learned;
- Gaining a head start at higher education;
- Changing their attitudes about lifelong learning;
- Understanding a global view and ethical thinking; and
- Becoming familiar with work ethics and occupational ideas.

Industry and HEI admissions officer views

What advantages and disadvantages did employer and admissions officers see with the CP?

The employer and admissions officers we interviewed appreciated the CP's combination of academic and career-related education and believed that these provided students with useful sets of skills. The early specialisation of CP students, however, was also seen as a disadvantage, as students applying for particular courses would have acquired specialist skills, which could be a disadvantage when competing with non-CP students holding broader skills. Additionally, the lack of knowledge about the CP amongst admissions officers was noted as a further potential disadvantage for students.

Did employers and admissions officers have applicants with a CP certificate, and if so, did they accept them for study or work? If they did not have applicants with a CP certificate, under which circumstances would they accept CP students?

Only a few of the industry and HEI interviewees in our study had received applications from CP students. Three HEIs in North America had already accepted students. None of them said that they had turned down applicants with a CP certificate. Nearly all of the industry and HEI interviewees stated that they would accept CP students. Circumstances under which they would accept applicants depended mainly on the course students had applied for, their DP subjects and whether they had studied these subjects at higher or standard level, and other skills they might have acquired. In some institutions, specific procedures were undertaken for applicants with an unusual and/or lesser-known secondary school qualification such as the CP. In Germany, CP students were not allowed to study at a public HEI.

Conclusions and recommendations

As a general conclusion, most students in our study were satisfied with the CP, and a sizeable proportion said that they would embark on the CP again. Similarly, a majority considered the time after graduation with a CP certificate to have been successful.

Recommendations provided in the body of the report concern the recruitment of students into the CP, the clarity of careers and the transferability of skills acquired in the CP, the reputation of the CP, the selection of subjects and Career-related Study to optimise skills gained through the CP, and the communication associated with the CP. In the conclusion of this report, some implications and suggestions for further research have been provided for consideration by the IBO.

1. Introduction

The Institute for Employment Research (IER) at Warwick University was commissioned by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) to undertake a study of IB Career-related Programme (CP) students' experiences, their post-secondary destinations and outcomes. This report will describe students' experiences, both during their time at school and thereafter, based on data from an online survey and qualitative follow-up interviews. Additionally, one employer and eight training and higher education institutions (HEIs) admissions officers were interviewed.

In 2014, the qualification earned by students was called the IBCC (International Baccalaureate Career-related Certificate); however, in 2015 this term has changed to CP (Career-related Programme). For this report, we use the term CP (rather than the old IBCC) throughout and have modified participant responses to refer to CP rather than IBCC.

1.1 The CP

The IB Career-related Programme combines both academic subjects and career-related studies through which students gain an internationally recognised education from the well-known and established International Baccalaureate Organisation. The CP integrates academic and practical learning in a rigorous way and develops skills and competencies required for life-long learning.

The reasons for the inclusion of vocational training in schools can be broadly distinguished into three categories: instrumental, educational and social.

Instrumental reasons refer to the level of skills in a community, i.e., if the skills were not taught in and funded by public institutions, fewer people would learn them than is economically desirable.

Educational reasons refer to learners' increased motivation in a contextualised environment. In these cases, the curriculum content would be related directly to practical issues. According to Ryan, there are two advantages for doing this: "The first is cognitive: students may find it easier to understand an idea or a theory when it is taught in a practical context. The second is motivational: students may try harder to learn a theory or a formal technique when it is taught in a practical context" (2003:149).

Social reasons refer to the importance of educational attainment for life chances. Career-related education can help to reduce socio-economic inequality. Career-related education, in this context, informally guarantees substantial skill development to all but the least able and motivated young people (Ryan, 2003).

Social competencies acquired in the workplace, together with academic skills and knowledge, are expected to smooth young peoples' transition either directly into work, to learn in skill-appropriate employment or an apprenticeship, or to enter further or higher education (Levels et al., 2014).

The CP was promoted by the IB as an ideal course of study for students looking to pursue a range of pathways because:

- They could combine academic subjects with their interests and skills;
- The CP provides more career options as it allows access to further or higher education, apprenticeships and employment;
- Students can learn other languages and cultures;
- Students can build friendships and connections, as well as develop essential life skills such as critical thinking, communication and personal development; and
- Students can become independent learners (Source: IBO 2015¹).

According to the IB, students can be awarded a CP certificate if they have completed:

- A Career-related Study (that is accredited, quality assured, and formally part of the student's timetable during the two years of the CP);
- At least two Diploma Programme (DP) courses (studied at standard level or higher level, one of which must be offered over two years) awarded a grade 3 or higher²;
- A Reflective Project awarded a grade of D or higher³;
- A Community and Service programme (at least 50 hours of participation over the two-year period of the CP);
- Language Development (study of a language other than the student's best language, which includes at least 50 hours of participation over the two-year period of the CP); and
- An "Approaches to Learning" (ATL) course (at least 90 hours of teaching over the two-year period of the CP) (Source: IBO 2014).

During our study there were a total of 87 authorized CP schools located in Australia, Germany, Jordan, Mexico, The Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America and Vietnam. In preparation for the study described here, all CP coordinators were contacted to find out how many students were awarded a CP certificate in 2014. According to the coordinators, 339 students had graduated with a CP certificate from 38 schools in 2014 (see: Table 1.1). The majority of CP students graduated in the USA and the UK followed by Finland, Germany and the UAE.

Table 1.1: CP graduates in 2014

Country	Number of CP graduates, according to CP coordinators	Number of schools
USA	155	19
UK	123	12
Germany	13	1
Finland	32	2
Australia	2	1
Thailand	1	1
UAE	13	2
Total	339	38

Source: Email and telephone communication with CP coordinators

¹ <http://www.ibo.org/globalassets/digital-toolkit/posters/cp-10-reasons-poster-en.pdf> (accessed 31-07-2015)

² Performance in each DP course is graded on a number scale from 1 (minimum) to 7 (maximum).

³ The reflective project is graded on a letter scale from E (minimum) to A (maximum).

1.2 The study

A multi-methods study, consisting of a student survey, qualitative student interviews and employer/admissions officer interviews was conducted with the key aims of:

- Exploring the experiences of students who have recently completed the IB Career-related Programme;
- Documenting the post-secondary destinations of CP students; and
- Investigating the contribution of the CP to student post-secondary outcomes.

All 339 students who were awarded a CP certificate in 2014 were invited to take part in the survey, either directly through email from the IER or via an invitation provided by their CP schools. Existing mailing lists from the IBO were enhanced by email addresses gained from CP coordinators at individual schools. However, in some countries, CP coordinators were not entitled to pass on the email addresses of past students. In these cases, schools were asked to send out invitations to take part in the study on our behalf. This was initiated with the hope that students would respond to invitations given directly from their previous schools but proved not to be the case, as Table 1.2 shows.

Table 1.2: Response rates (survey)

	Total number of CP graduates in 2014	Emails bounced back	Survey respondents
Invited by IER	189	8	55
Invited by schools	150	0	7
Total	339	8	62

In total, 62 CP students⁴ from 23 schools responded to the survey. The survey was available online from the 10th of February to the 30th of May 2015. In fifteen schools, only one or two CP students took part in the survey. In eight schools, between three and eight former students filled in the survey.

Table 1.3 displays the characteristics of survey respondents. Most respondents were from either the UK or the USA, reflecting the greater number of CP students in these countries. In this publically accessible report, information in certain cells in Tables 1.3 and 1.4 has been removed to ensure participant anonymity.

Although the majority of students took their final exams in 2014, one student stated that she could not remember when she completed her final exams. Furthermore, three students from a Finnish school stated that they sat the CP final exam in May 2013 but completed their studies in 2014. According to the CP co-ordinator, students in this school take the final exams during the second academic year whilst the career-related qualification as a whole takes three years.

On average, respondents were 19 years old. Some respondents, however, were as old as 29 years of age. Most of the mature respondents, some of whom were included in our qualitative study, had studied for their CP certificates in Finland. Slightly more women than men filled in the survey. The overall majority were citizens

⁴ For consistency reasons, those who graduated in 2014 are referred to as CP students in this report.

of the country they lived in, and just under half of the sample spoke English as a second language (see: Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Characteristics of the survey respondents

		Number of respondents
Countries	Finland	
	Germany	
	UK	
	USA	
	Australia	
	UAE	
CP final exam	May 2014	53
	November 2014	5
	Other, can't remember	4
Age	Average age (at time of survey)	19.4
Gender	Male	28
	Female	32
	Missing	2
Citizenship	I am a citizen of the country I live in, and I do not have any other citizenship	53
	I have multiple citizenships, one of which is of the country I live in	3
	I am a citizen of another country, and I do not have multiple citizenships	4
	Missing	2
English language skills	English was my first and only language	35
	I was brought up to be bilingual in English and another language	8
	I became a competent English speaker as a child	11
	I became a competent English speaker during my CP	3
	Other and missing	5

Source: CP survey, N = 62

In addition to a quantitative survey of CP students, qualitative interviews were also conducted with a group of CP alumni. Table 1.4 gives an overview of participants who took part in this aspect of the study.

Table 1.4: Qualitative telephone interview participants

Alias	Number of IB Diploma courses	CP school located in	Current activity	Survey participant
Jonathan	Could not remember		Community College	No
Frances	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Nicole	2 IB Diploma courses		Casual job, applying for HE	Yes

Anna	4 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Victoria	2 IB Diploma courses		College	Yes
Eric	2 IB Diploma courses		Unemployed	No
Amelie	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Jenny	4 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Andrea	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Isabel	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Finlay	4 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
James	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	No
Mark	2 IB Diploma courses		Gap Year	Yes
Ellie	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Alfred	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	Yes
Simon	2 IB Diploma courses		Other	No
Stephan	Could not remember		Employed	Yes
André	2 IB Diploma courses		Access course to Higher Education	Yes
Tyler	Could not remember		Looking for a job	Yes
Ryan	2 IB Diploma courses		Higher Education	No

Interviews were conducted via telephone or Skype in English and in German. Each interview took between 16 and 44 minutes. In some cases, IB coordinators were also contacted to better understand student survey responses (for example, to explain the particularities of CP organisation at their school) and their comments are included in this report, where appropriate.

In addition to the student questionnaire and the qualitative interviews, admissions officers and one employer were interviewed. These interviews were conducted via telephone, face-to-face conversations or email questions, if time differences were problematic. Responses from these groups were mainly used to explore the acceptance of the CP as an entry qualification for further or higher education and employment.

Table 1.5: Characteristics of the employer and admissions officer interviewees

Name of organisation	Country	Type of organisation
University of Warwick	UK	HEI
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service in the UK (UCAS)	UK	Admissions provider for UK HEIs
Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung	Germany	Admissions provider for German HEIs
Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen	Germany	Admissions provider for German HEIs
Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne	Switzerland	HEI
Columbia College Chicago	USA	HEI
Employer (large conference hotel)	Germany	Employer
United States Air Force Academy	USA	HEI
Canterbury Christ Church University	UK	HEI
Savannah College of Art and Design	USA	HEI

Data from the student questionnaires was downloaded and transferred into an SPSS file. After labelling and data cleaning, the data was analysed using descriptive methods (i.e., percentages). Results from the questionnaires are reported in the body of the report and are interwoven with qualitative findings. In some instances, findings are presented in stacked bar graphs in the report. Additionally, to illustrate students' post-secondary school activities, an activity history file was created and displayed in a table where students' weekly activities can be observed (see: Section 3.1).

Qualitative interviews were taped with students' agreement. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, following an interview guide that included several main topics subdivided into subtopics. Questions were usually asked in the same order, unless a participant response naturally followed into another topic or when a student answered a subsequent question without it being asked explicitly. The interviews were transcribed, and responses were coded as snippets of text into themes. The coded qualitative data were analysed in two ways: (1) a thematic analysis in which the answers of different students to the same question or groups of question were contrasted, and (2) as individual narratives to form case study descriptions. Selected quotes have been chosen to illustrate various findings.

1.3 The structure of the report

The study aimed to generate an understanding of what kind of students enter the CP, how they progress during and after the programme, what kinds of skills and competencies they acquire and how they use these skills and competencies after their studies. In detail, Chapter 2 covers students' experiences during their time at school including:

- Student pathways to the CP (2.1)
- What motivated students to enter the CP? (2.2)
- Student subject choices and experiences with the Reflective Project (2.3)
- Student experiences with the Career-related Study (2.4)
- Student experiences with CP core components (2.5)

- What were students' experiences with careers advice provided by their schools? How did students decide which careers to enter? What role did the CP play in the career-finding process? (2.6)
- How satisfied were students with selected aspects, such as the information given about the CP, course organisation, workload and reputation of the CP? (2.7)
- Would students choose the CP again, with hindsight? (2.8)

Chapter 3 describes CP students' pathways after they left school and addresses the following questions:

- What kind of pathways did students undertake after secondary school? (Activity history) (3.1)
- What kind of skills, competencies and knowledge gains do students associate with the CP? Do they utilize them in their current activities, and, if so, how do they do it? (3.2)
- What are student HEI experiences (3.3)? Did students experience any barriers to having their CP certificates accepted by university/college/training admissions officers and employers? Did they experience the CP as an asset or an encumbrance to securing placements in further education, training or employment? (3.4)
- What were the experiences of those who entered career-related education/apprenticeships (3.5), employment (3.6) or unemployment (3.7)?
- What are their future plans (3.8)?

Chapter 4 presents admissions officers' and employers' views on the CP as an entry qualification to employment, further or higher education, and covers:

- Employers' and admissions officers' evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of the CP (4.1); and
- Employers' and admissions officers' need for further information and their anticipation of future developments (4.3).

Chapter 5 provides brief case studies of six students who graduated with a CP certificate in 2014.

Finally, Chapter 6 outlines conclusions from the study and offers a number of recommendations.

2. Students' Experiences with the CP

The following chapter integrates closed and open-ended survey responses and interview data to explore why students choose the CP and examines their experiences with DP subjects, Career-related Study and CP core. The kind of careers information that students received and how they rated this, together with their satisfaction with selected aspects of the CP such as course organisation and workload during their studies, is also covered. A final section of this chapter examines whether students would do the CP again, or if they would have preferred to undertake a different kind of secondary education.

As a caveat to the following results, it is important to note that a student's individual experience was likely shaped by the way the school implemented the CP. As already described (see: Section 1.2), one Finnish school allowed students to take the final exams after two years; whilst during the third year, the career-related education took place. This illustrates how the organisation of the CP varies considerable, not only between the countries, but also between different schools within each country. As one student survey respondent explained,

My sister is taking the CP at a different school and she is receiving what seems like a different qualification and different information about what is required of her. (Survey respondent, UK)

Additionally, some schools changed the requirements for CP students during its implementation. For example, this happened in Anna's school, where students initially were required to take four IB Diploma courses, which was later reduced.

I feel like there has been two separate programs even though they are both called CP! (Anna)

In Eric's case, the career-related aspect of the course was so strongly emphasized that the CP felt

more like a job than studies. (Eric)

The diversity of the CP within a school, as well as between schools and countries, obviously has implications for the research as students' individual experiences and pathways cannot be disconnected from their individual CP. The following analysis, nevertheless, attempts to find common experiences but also identifies idiosyncratic findings. The first section (2.1) describes students' pathways into the CP, followed by their reasons for undertaking the programme (2.2). Students' experiences with their subject choices and the Reflective Project (2.3), the Career-related Study (2.4), and other CP features (Approaches to Learning, Community and Service and Language Development (2.5) are then discussed. Section 2.6 explores the careers information students received. Finally, section 2.7 describes students' satisfaction with selected aspects of the CP, and section 2.8 reports whether students would do the CP again.

2.1 Pathways into the CP

Whilst the majority of survey participants entered the CP at the age of 16, a small group were 17 years old, and the oldest was 29 years old. Most of the more mature

survey respondents took the CP in Finland. Mature students differed from younger students as they had already entered an educational pathway, or even employment, before embarking on the CP. Stephan described his pathway into the CP as follows:

I was 23. . . . I had a long, long journey since High school. Because after High school, I actually went for engineering university and I left that after a half year on personal reasons . . . I started radio and TV studies in Finland, so I have a new school there, it is a college and in the college there was this opportunity to do the IB studies. (Stephan)

André reported that the CP offered him a second chance after failing his previous exams.

I had come out of my A -levels, AS, at 16, and I was very different to how I am now. I was not willing to put the work in, was willing to, you know, squander my time... I've changed a lot, I've grown up. Then after my first AS year, I found out that my secondary school had brought out a sixth form, and I looked into it, because I knew that I couldn't do another year of A level, I would just fail again. I literally did fail everything! Terrible!

The CP offered exactly the same subjects as I had just done, so effectively I had another chance. So I got straight into IT and business again. And I also did two AS science along with my CP. So at the time, for me in my situation, the CP was actually an opportunity. . . . I think my case was sort of exceptional in that for me it was the only way I was ever going to get to uni, after my failed first year of A-levels. It was a second chance for me and the CP seemed like the right thing to do at the time. (André)

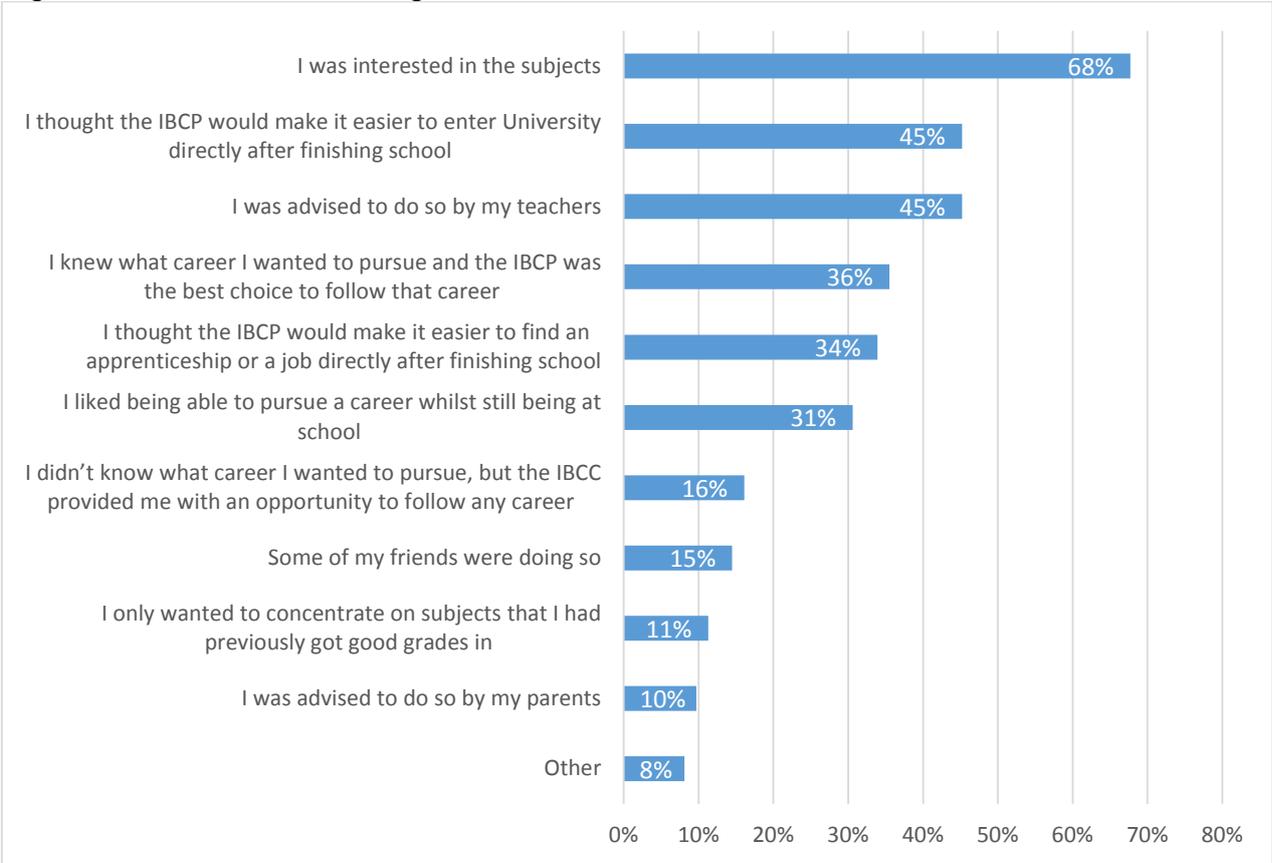
Of all survey respondents, one third had already studied career-related education before they were 16 years old. In some cases, subjects chosen by students for their CPs were closely related to the Career-related Study students chose. One student, for example, who had studied marketing before entering the CP, took three DP courses, “Business and Management (SL),” “Business and Management (HL)” and “History (HL),” and her Career-related Study in fashion advertising. Another student, who said that he had previously studied engineering classes, took “Design Technology (SL),” “Language B (SL),” and undertook his Career-related Study in engineering.

To summarize, most students entered the CP at an age typical of senior secondary studies; however, some mature students used it to make up for previously failed attempts to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary for their desired career pathways. Some students had already gained some career-related skills before embarking on the CP.

2.2 Reasons for undertaking the CP

The following horizontal bar graph, Figure 2.1, shows students' reasons for doing the CP. The three most common reasons for students choosing the CP was because 1) they were interested in the subjects available as part of the CP, 2) they thought it would make it easier to enter higher education directly after finishing secondary school, and 3) because they were advised to do so by their teachers.

Figure 2.1: Reasons for doing the CP



Note: This is a multi-response question.

Interest in the subjects offered in the CP

As noted above, 68 percent of survey respondents stated that they chose the CP because they were interested in the subjects offered as part of the programme. Many of the alumni interviewees said they chose the CP because they wanted to study subjects offered as part of the CP.

I chose the course because I was interested in international business and management and I was looking for a challenge. I was more interested in international business than just [national business studies]. This course was only available in the CP, not available in other courses or in normal schools. I thought business and management was the most interesting college option for me at that time. (Eric)

Interviewees such as Simon and Eric, both English non-native speakers, appreciated the fact that they would be able to learn English language skills and study internationally relevant skills.

So for me it was good, I wanted to speak English, it was the best opportunity for that. (Simon)

When I saw CP offering an international business course, I thought that was the best for me because I really enjoyed English and I wanted to learn it better. (Eric)

Use the CP to support higher education entry

For 45 percent of the student survey respondents, the CP stood out because they thought it would make it easier to enter university directly after school, or as one of the survey respondents explained it,

I wanted to be more competitive for college applications so I could get into a top notch program. (Survey respondent, USA)

In Anna's case, an alumni interviewee, her Career-related Study took place at the university she wanted to enter, which is why she knew that there would be a close fit between her CP secondary school studies and the university course she eventually wanted to enter.

... to me it seemed like the perfect option because I already knew that was the degree that I wanted to do, and I was guaranteed entry as well as long as I got, you know, average results, and I was given a semester in the subject for free. (Anna)

Several other alumni interviewees also anticipated that their Career-related Studies during high school would combine with their tertiary studies to give them an extra advantage in their job searches after university.

I liked that it was very focused and career driven, I thought that would help me not just for college applications but also when I eventually applied for a job. (Jenny)

And, once I hold my 2:2, or a 2:1, with a degree from [UK HEI], and work experience from the CP, I am pretty sure that I will find my way. (Frances)

The role of teachers in the recruitment of CP students

Nearly half of the survey respondents (45 percent) stated that they were advised to embark on the CP by their teachers. The role of teachers in the recruitment of potential CP students appeared more pronounced than other existing qualifications, such as A levels in the UK, and is likely due to the newness of the qualification. In their need for information, students could not rely on the experiences of previous students, both in terms of the expected workload during their studies at high school and the use of the qualification for career-related training, higher education or employment after graduation. It is thus less likely that students themselves had proactively chosen to enter the CP and that the school and their teachers were responsible for identifying which students would be suitable for the CP. For example, one student explained,

I was encouraged before it was announced to the school that it was an option. I was approached by [a teacher], he told me about it and he said "you would be the perfect candidate for it, are you interested". (Anna)

In the alumni student interviews, all but one participant (Eric) remembered that they had been approached by teachers who advised them to enrol in the CP. According

to the student interviewees, teachers advised them to embark on the CP because they either did not qualify for the DP admissions criteria or because the students wanted to specialise their education according to their career plans.

In my junior year I was trying to figure out whether to take full IB classes, and the opportunity came along. I didn't meet the language requirements for the IB Diploma, and this [the CP] was a good option for me, I don't have to worry about completing one extra year of foreign language which I might not necessarily find useful in future life. In our school, you had to have completed three years of foreign language by your sophomore year. (Jenny)

I was interested in the IB DP. But I only wanted to do a few of the classes, and my IB counsellor mentioned the CP. (Ellie)

I don't want to sugar-coat it but a lot of CP students are put into CP not because of their own decision, usually their grades were not good enough to go into the IB [DP], realistically speaking. (James)

There were too many classes [in the IB DP] that we were not interested in. You did notice it in our class – so we were a real management class, and there was nobody who was interested in science, or in literature. (Frances)

However, all of the student interviewees also raised how the newness of the CP had caused uncertainty about the strength of the programme and the acceptance of the qualification after graduation.

But there was also a bit of a worry because it was so new and we were the first people to be doing it, that something could go wrong. (Anna)

It would be nice to be able to meet past students and their experience on it. We did meet some, but they were from a different school, and obviously all schools are different so it wasn't useful. Although, we were only the second lot to go through, so in a way we were their guinea pigs, obviously, there is a learning curve about what works and what doesn't work. (Amelie)

We had to grow with the program itself. (Ellie)

The CP as a less complex form of the IB DP

Many interviewees referred to the CP as offering the possibility of obtaining an IB qualification without the large academic workload associated with the Diploma Programme. Some explained that they had extra curricula commitments and that studying for a CP had allowed them more time for these activities. Interestingly, students referred to the DP as *the full IB* or *the IB*, whilst the CP was spoken of using the acronym *CP*. That is, it appeared that students held a perception of the CP as a less academic form of the IB DP; and therefore, they were not doing the “whole IB qualification.”

Obviously, I wanted the IB, the whole International Baccalaureate, on my resume, but I also didn't want to be locked down, I wanted to be able to do other things, I didn't want to be doing homework every single minute of my existence during

High School. (Alfred, who with hindsight would have undertaken the diploma programme)

... the full IB program, was just a little too rigorous for me. You know, my councillor she actually has been coming up for me one day and she told me about this program and I thought it sounded really good, you know. . . . This program fits for me. . . . Yeah and I thought that this was still a bit of a prestigious program and it was just an IB program but yet, I felt like I be would have succeed better and maintain better grades doing the CP program than going full IB. (Finlay)

It was offered by the school, because I was never the academic type (laughs). . . . And the IB [diploma] is very complicated, and they said, the CP would be perfect for me. Because, I could do some internships and you'll get prepared for the university, somehow. (Frances)

I was also involved in a lot of extracurricular activities at school which I didn't want to give up and I thought the CP would give me a chance to balance all that. (Jenny)

The program appeared to be academically challenging and easy to manage with a busy schedule. (Survey respondent, USA)

A tailored career-related and academic qualification

Just over a third of the survey respondents (36 percent) indicated that they knew which career they wished to pursue and believed that the CP would support reaching their career goals. The student interviewees elaborated that they perceived the CP as a flexible qualification in which they could combine theoretical and practical aspects of their studies and extracurricular activities.

I am studying mechanical engineering at university. I decided that I wanted to study engineering when I was in my junior year. I knew what career I wanted to pursue. . . . I took one engineering course and I loved it, so I took the next one, I had lots of fun and I got good grades, and in my junior year I realised that not everyone else around me was getting good grades! I found it easy. So I did the senior design course, . . . that was really cool! I joined the robotics team in my junior year. I did physics that year for IB and I did math the next year, that's when I decided to focus on math, science, robotics and engineering. (Andrea)

Basically we were studying some media related studies in the school and we also had to do some media projects like my Reflective Project, it was an essay about media, social networks, but otherwise we had some CP projects where we were filming, because I was in a radio and TV department, so we have to do a short film for CP. (Stephan)

To summarize, the majority of students enrolled in the CP because they were interested in the subjects offered as part of the programme and because they wanted to be competitive when entering further education. Many students were recruited by teachers to enter the CP, which could have been a result of the newness of the qualification. The CP was perceived, both by students and by teachers, as a less academically arduous qualification, which allowed time for extracurricular activities or

for personal development. The CP was seen by many as a way to combine both academic and career-related interests.

2.3 Subject choices and Reflective Project

More than half of our survey respondents (57 percent) stated that they had chosen two IB Diploma Programme subjects. While only two IB DP subjects are mandatory for the completion of a CP, a further 13 percent indicated they had completed three DP subjects, and 18 percent said that they had studied four DP subjects. Thirteen percent of respondents could not remember their second IB Diploma Programme subject and said that they took only one subject.

Table 2.1 shows the most popular Diploma subjects studied by survey respondents and the average grade respondents indicated they received for the subjects. The most frequently chosen IB Diploma Programme courses were, by far, “Business and Management (SL)” and “Language B (SL).” The subjects in which students on average reported being awarded grades of 5 or higher were “Language ab initio,” “Film (HL),” “Mathematical Studies (SL),” and “Language B (SL).” Sixty-one percent of all subjects studied were standard-level DP subjects, and 30 percent were higher-level DP subjects.

Table 2.1: Most popular IB Diploma subjects studied and average grade

Subject*	N	Average grade
Business and Management (SL)	23	4.17
Language B (SL)	15	5.2
Mathematical Studies (SL)	8	5.25
History (HL)	8	4.38
Information Technology in a Global Society (SL)	7	4.57
Language A: language and literature (HL)	6	4.5
Psychology (SL)	6	4.67
Language A: literature (HL)	5	4.6
Business and Management (HL)	5	4.6
Language ab initio	4	5.75
Film (HL)	4	5.25
Total	138	4.64

*Pooled subjects (N = 138 subjects studied)

The main reasons interviewees gave for selecting particular Diploma courses were because they thought it might be possible to combine these with the knowledge gained in their Career-related Studies or because they had an interest in the subjects.

The best thing about it was the opportunity to do academic and practical subjects. I did Psychology and Maths, but also more creative and hands on subjects. The best thing was the combination of the two. (Ryan)

Core subjects, business and management. Everything I studied at the CP was directed towards Business and management. So, for example, English class, we

learned, how to write CVs, for example, we learned, how to write letters and cover letters, etc. I think what kept it interesting for me in the CP was that all the subjects, all the case studies and so, all was aimed towards business elements. (James)

The CP ITGS [Information Technology in a Global Society] course was also quite different from the AS course I had done before, more interesting. So, for me, the CP really was the course that I wanted to study at the time. That was probably my favourite subject. (André)

Two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated they were satisfied with the choice of subjects available to them. However, the interviewee responses suggested that the choice of subjects provided by schools to CP students varied enormously. In some schools, students said they did not have any choice in the selection of their subjects or had a limited range of subjects available from which to choose.

I had to pick two IB subjects. It would be nice to have a bit more flexibility about the amount of subjects, maybe pick more IB or less BTEC... I'm not sure how this would work, but it would be very useful to get more recognition. (Ryan)

Another negative: too few subject choices. . . . We didn't get to decide which other subjects we would drop; it was all done for us. (Anna)

I just feel that there wasn't enough information about the subjects, that there is more than just the two components that we did. It would have been nice to have been offered the choice. We only had two subjects to choose from. (Amelie)

There was no choice if you wanted to do some other subjects. (André)

In other schools, however, students had a large selection from which to choose, as the following quotes illustrate.

The IB coordinators were talking to us about the course and they explained which courses we could take in the CP program. . . . I think we had the choice of all the regular courses, but we were supposed to take two or three courses. Choice wasn't limited. (Alfred)

The best is the choice of courses. There was a lot of courses you could choose to do. (Victoria)

To summarize, most survey participants only studied two IB Diploma subjects, and this allowed many to focus on their interests and, in some cases, to combine their academic and career-related studies. However, there were differences within schools and countries with regards to the subject choices students were given. It is notable that most of the students who reported not having much choice were from the UK whilst students from the USA were more likely to state that they had a large choice of subjects.

Reflective Project

When asked to rate the Reflective Project, 13 percent of all survey respondents indicated they felt this aspect of the CP core was “very good”; 39 percent rated it as “good,” and 39 percent as “fair.” A further 6 percent rated the Reflective Project as “poor,” and 3 percent rated it as a “very poor” component of the CP core. In most cases, the Reflective Project was completed in essay form.

I just treated it as a task we had to complete to get the CP. We got a fair bit of help with it and we had sessions in which we would all sit down with laptops with the teacher, and if you needed help, you could go to him, but it was a pretty straightforward essay. I don't think anyone did a film or anything more unusual like that. Just one person did a sketchbook, but nearly everyone else, opted for just an essay. (Ryan)

In some cases, however, students used a different medium to present their findings. This flexibility was especially valued by students who did not feel confident in their writing skills.

I made a 10-minute video on the ethics of fast food advertising to young children, rather than writing paper. . . . I've never been the greatest writer in the world, but when it comes to making a video, I can be pretty creative. (Mark)

Other students reported how they enjoyed the workload of the Reflective Project but how they also found this particular part of the CP curriculum demanding. Nonetheless, they described how this would prepare them for higher education and how it could help in the career-finding process.

And the worst thing I have to say it was the Reflective Project! Because at first it was really hard for me and the requirements were kind of tight... It was also good, but only after that, once you have finished it, it's a good thing to have done . . . I did it about the ethics of selling guns to children in the USA. It was a rather hard Reflective Project, but it was kind of fun, my teacher helped me a lot, so I think I did it well, for me, at the assessment I got 5 out of 7 [sic]! The hardest thing was to find information about it and present both viewpoints. (Simon)

The Reflective Project we did towards the end of our senior year and I did mine on “artificial intelligence”. I think it was great. It was very, very similar to an actual college project and how rigorous they will be. (Alfred)

I found it quite interesting, and when I find something interesting, it doesn't seem so hard, I just power through it. (Isabel)

It was definitely one of the more challenging things that I did. I did mine on Global engineering, about products designed in America and sent to Africa. A lot of the time in our ‘Approaches to Learning’ class was dedicated to researching for our Reflective Project. That was nice, to have scheduled time to work on it. It was good to go through it even though it was hard, because it was a different way of researching. It helped kids in my class find an area of engineering we wanted to focus on in the future. It just opened our eyes about what engineering can be. It was one of those hard things you have to go through. (Andrea)

Some student interviewees also described how they connected their Reflective Projects with their work experiences.

The Reflective Project was very interesting because it allowed for so much room and individual choice. I wrote mine about whether it is more ethical to eat aquarium fish than get them from the wild. A comparison between whether it's more ethical to breed aquarium fish or catch them in the wild. I always had an interest in aquariums and I had just been working at a pet store. (Erik.)

To summarize, just over half of the survey respondents rated the Reflective Project as a good or very good aspect of the CP core. Whilst most had written an essay, some used different forms to present their research findings such as a video. Most students agreed that it was a very demanding task. However, they felt that it would prepare them for higher education and further clarify their career studies, and it also allowed them to combine personal interests with curricular requirements.

2.4 Career-related Study

At the time of the survey, a surprisingly large proportion of respondents⁵ (44 percent) indicated they had forgotten the focus of their Career-related Studies, or they had confused it with the Reflective Project. Of those who did remember, approximately a third did a Career-related Study in art and design (e.g., film, fashion, audio-visual communication or architecture); 23 percent studied business related subjects (such as advertising, administration or management); 20 percent had a focus in engineering (e.g., hydraulic fracturing, auto-body repair) and 11 percent in health and social care. The remainder focussed on customer service (9 percent) and culinary arts (6 percent).

Again, similar to student DP subject choices (see: Section 2.3), the options that students were offered with regards to a Career-related Study varied significantly among schools. However, compared to subject choices, where US schools had offered more choices for CP students, there were no clear differences between the countries with regards to the range of Career-related Studies from which students could choose. In the following quotes, Nicole and Andrea explained that they did not have many options from which to choose a Career-related Study.

The courses themselves are well organised, but the only issue we had in the beginning of the CP, we had to choose between business, and travel and tourism and we could not do both. And there were only two choices. . . . we didn't really have much option to choose from. (Nicole)

We all did the same 'Project Lead The Way' classes. For the CP we only had the engineering path. The IB [DP] had IB theatre and IB art so people could go that way. (Andrea)

In contrast, Victoria and Jenny reported that they had a wide variety of Career-related Studies from which to choose.

We had music, art, business, health and social, childcare, and there was one more, I think applied science. (Victoria)

⁵ N = 62

We had a decent amount of choice of my high school. [Next to business and marketing], there was sports medicine. I could have also taken cooking but I'm not the best cook in the world, and automotive engineering. (Jenny)

As part of the CP student survey, respondents⁶ were asked who had provided the Career-related Study they took part in, and again many (21 percent) did not know or could not remember. Of those who did remember, 57 percent said they took part in the school's own Career-related Study course; 18 percent said they did a Pearson BTEC course; 14 percent completed a career-related school or university course and 10 percent said they took part in the United States based Project Lead The Way.

Anna explained how important it was that her school and the provider of the Career-related Study, a locally based university, worked closely together.

So, I stayed at the university where I did my subjects. The Director of the Creative Faculty was very involved in the CP process, so he knows who we are, what subjects we did. If there were any problems, we could go straight to him, which is very beneficial. But I do realise that these things would be quite different, had it not been for the fact that my school and this university were very on-board and diligent with it. (Anna)

In total, 42 percent of survey respondents indicated that they undertook internships that they regarded as useful; although, 16 percent said they undertook internships and felt these were not useful. Another 42 percent said that the option of doing an internship had not been available to them. In the student interviews, 14 participants reported that they did one or more internships as part of their CPs, and all reported positively on their work placements, as the following examples show.

What is amazing about the CP, what I really loved, was that I could meet with so many people, you learn your communication skills, you get out of there, you get to start working, you get to see how it's going to be working in different industries. E.g. I was in the hotel industry, I tried working in a pet shop, I tried working in a water park ... so you have all these options to choose from. You get to see how people treat you in the workplace that was the big advantage of the CP. . . . I wanted a lot of practical experience, and that's what the CP has given me. (Nicole)

My first internship was in . . . management, my second was in a chemical manufacturer, and the third was in the military. (James)

I worked in a charity, and modelling clothes in a local store, and also in the summer before senior year I worked in an office where I took notes at meetings, did marketing research. (Jenny)

Ryan, Jenny and James explained how they had to search for internships themselves with the support of their schools and how this contributed to their job-searching skills.

I did a fair bit of experience, but it depends on the person. At school, no one sits you down and says "look come on guys, experience is important", which it is. So

⁶ N = 62

you have to go online, research yourself, and ask a teacher to help you a little bit. . . . I went to an architecture charity in Birmingham and I got to experience as architect there. That was through me applying, and my teacher helped me out a little bit. Hardly anybody else got experience. (Ryan)

The school didn't find them, I approached them all myself, just taking initiative and suggesting myself. . . . My summer internship, I just went and said, hey, I'd really like some work experience before I go off to college and I told them about the courses we do in high school and they took me on! (Jenny)

Before I got in these internships, I had to perform well in an interview. I had to research which company I was applying for, and I had to know what their goal and their mission was, all of that was taught in the CP. (James)

One employer in Germany, a large conference hotel that regularly takes CP students on as interns, explained to us the types of jobs that are undertaken by CP students during an internship.

The view behind the scenes is very interesting for young people. They are also physically very active, running about from early till 6 pm. Young people do physical tasks, more than at school. And that is a challenge. . . . Young people go through various areas, restaurant, banquet, housekeeping. . . . If somebody speaks German well, they can also work at the reception for a few days. . . . some don't really dare to do that but if they are able to speak the language, they can do it. . . . Last year, I met up with lots of young people. The CP coordinator had collected their questions and they were very advanced, they covered central marketing, human resources, accounting. (Employer)

To summarize, many CP students did their Career-related Study in art and design, business or engineering, and the majority said that their schools had provided their own career programmes. Internships played a major role in career-related learning for more than half of the respondents, with many students appreciating their work experiences in different sectoral settings and saying these experiences contributed to their communication and job-searching skills. Indeed, for interviewees such as Andrea, the Career-related Study was one of the big advantages of the CP.

Yes, I really liked that it gave me more room than the IB [DP] would. But I think it also allowed me to go deeper into engineering. [After elaborating her increased technical writing skills and her knowledge gain in physics and calculus]. So having that in high school is nice. (Andrea)

2.5 “Approaches to Learning,” Community Service and Language courses

As part of the CP, students are required to embark on Community and Service activities, undertake language learning and participate in an “Approaches to Learning” course. The following interview extracts give examples of activities undertaken for these components of the CP.

People from local businesses donated computers to our school. People in my class were part of a club, but anyone can join the club, although it was mainly people who were in the CP. So if the business donated computer, we would fix them up and then donate them to the people in the area that needed the computers. I really liked that a lot actually. I like helping people out. We brought them to the school and we taught them how to use the computers and how to set it up when they get home and then after that we loaded up the computer into the car and they would be on their way! (Jonathan)

I've done 50 hours of community service - in Oxfam, and helping out in a youth centre near me, it was quite fun and interesting to do, something different. (Isabel)

A classmate and I started a food program in our school, uneaten food that was salvageable was put in boxes and we transported it to the local shelter so they had extra food. It wasn't hours-based; it was just a project we did. (Mark)

In response to an open-ended question, a survey participant explained that she learned to value situations from different angles and from a different culture through the "Approaches to Learning" and Language Development courses.

I think that the world view and the curiosity to look at situations from a different perspective stemming from our work in Approaches to Learning will definitely be useful in my future studies and experiences, as well as my love for learning a second language, which for me is Spanish. The Language Development core allowed me to learn more about Spanish and Hispanic culture than what was given in the ab initio course, which focuses more on grammar and vocabulary than culture. (Survey respondent)

Anna, a film student, described in her interview a project in which different parts of the CP curriculum such as the Career-related Study and language studies were combined, and she commented on how this had been a valuable experience.

We also did an interactive book for students on a computer program, based on Spanish horror films, using the language that we were studying at the time, and obviously, the skills from our film class. Although that was tough and took long time, it was a really good skill to learn. (Anna)

In contrast to the previous positive comments, however, Amelie and Isabel both went to the same school and studied Mandarin but agreed that this Language Development aspect of the CP did not improve their language skills.

We studied Mandarin...I'm going to be honest, I didn't find that useful. It wasn't really my strong language, but it was part of the course, so I did it. I couldn't even tell you how to say hello. (Amelie)

We did Mandarin at our CP, we got taught how to write the characters. But I haven't used it since, to be honest. (Isabel)

Another interviewee, James, also described how the name “Approaches to Learning” had a negative impact on the reputation of the CP within the school (see also: Section 2.7).

It was a bit humiliating to have a class called ‘Approach to learning’. That name as such sounds really hilarious. The DP students, they actually mocked us for having a class called ‘Approach to learning’. And this is similar to Theory of Knowledge. The others said, yes, a class ‘Approach to learning’ for CP only. . . . It was [just] the title of the class, because the class was similar to TOK [Theory of Knowledge], and in fact, a lot of people enjoyed the class. It was just the name. The name really does not help CP reputation. (James)

To summarize, student activities undertaken in ATL, Community and Service and language learning varied a great deal amongst the various schools. Whilst most students reported enjoying these aspects of the CP core, one student said he and his classmates felt marginalized because of the title of the “Approaches to Learning” course.

2.6 Careers information received and careers decision-making

When asked to indicate their satisfaction with the careers information their schools had offered to them, 81 percent were, in general, satisfied with information they were given. In most schools, various careers guidance activities are offered to students, although there were mixed views on the usefulness of some activities (Table 2.2). The activities students valued most were visits to universities, colleges or employers.

Table 2.2 Careers guidance available at school

	Yes, and it was useful	Yes, and it was not useful	No, this was not available to me	Total
Individual careers guidance at school	58 %	19 %	23 %	100 %
Classroom-based teaching on career or life planning	57 %	27 %	16 %	100 %
Presentations by representatives of universities, colleges or employers	53 %	29 %	18 %	100 %
Visits to universities, colleges or employers	63 %	8 %	29 %	100 %

In the student interviews, a number of participants gave useful critical feedback about the careers guidance they had received at their school and detailed how they would have liked to learn more about application skills, either for employment or for higher education.

Career guidance at school wasn't helpful. They presented different occupations, but I didn't feel that it applied to me. (Amelie)

We didn't do any learning on how to apply for jobs, write resumes, even just applying for things in general, like applying for university or different government things - those definitely would have been very helpful. Because in all of that you are left to your own devices! (Anna)

A lot of the CTE (career technical education) classes teach you how to write a resume but I would like to have learnt a bit more about interview skills, how to write a professional email, how to apply for a job. (Mark)

Some students also complained about the concentration on higher education and said that they would have liked to learn more about other options.

They only offered information about University and not as much information on other post-graduate information. (Survey respondent)

I think they can do more, expose people to more than just University. (Mark)

Furthermore, one of the mature survey respondents was not content with the careers information given as it was aimed at younger students and did not fit in with her experiences.

Poor information for those who may have not been working ever before, for me it was basics, but I don't remember that we would have had good introduction to reality what it is to apply to a job. (Survey respondent, Finland)

When looking at young peoples' career planning, it is important to bear in mind that this is a long-term process and that many factors influence their career choices (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Walther et al., 2015). Beyond schools, other factors including gender, age, students' social capital, peers and individual disposition all play a role in the careers decision-making processes. For example, Frances and Simon, on one hand, did not plan their careers in detail.

I like the CP. Really. I had fun, and, I am still not sure what I want to do later, but ... it is okay. (Frances)

No, not really. I don't plan my future so much, because I don't like to plan things a lot. I just do them and think about them later. I don't know, yet. . . . I always liked business; it's very good for me. I love doing things with it. I haven't really thought about it, you're asking difficult questions! Also if I'm good enough, I think I would try to study business law. (Simon)

On the other hand, Anna, Ryan, Ellie and Isabel were students who decided early on about their future occupations and were very clear in their career choices. In particular, Ryan, Anna and Ellie described in detail how they choose the CP as a means to pursue their occupational ideas.

I definitely knew I wanted to do business and creative industries which is still what I'm doing now. I actually asked at my first meeting with the University [as a provider of the Career-related Study], if I did this [CP] course, can I do a dual degree, because I wanted to do the business component as well, and they said definitely, and gave us a choice of three different dual degree so that we could do together with creative industries. (Anna)

If you knew where you wanted to go in the future, you could pick the CP, and it will direct you more towards a career. I wanted to do architecture, so I did IB Art and BTEC Engineering. (Ryan)

I decided I wanted to be a nurse. Half way into middle school I decided I wanted to work in health care, and I wanted to help people in need. I volunteered at different organisations and nursing homes; I really wanted to help someone else. That's what made me want to pursue a nursing career. . . . I will specialise in healthcare, that is my career pathway, and I was able to get my nursing certificate [in the CP]. It is the first step of becoming a nurse. I will be able to become a nurse practitioner, when I get my undergrad and grad. . . . Best thing would be the careers pathway and how I was able to get my nursing certificate. (Ellie)

Yes, I have been interested in business since year nine, and I always knew I wanted to do it at University. (Isabel)

In contrast to choosing the CP as a means to follow already existing career-related ideas, the CP helped André, Jonathan and Finlay to decide upon their career-related paths.

The reason why I wanted to go to university to do web development is because of the coursework element in that subject (ITGS) in the CP. (André)

I thought [the economics class in the CP] was really interesting, that's why I want to do business in the future. Because I liked learning about the economy, really interesting how we, the people, make the economy and the businesses. (Jonathan)

I really haven't a dream job but coming into my junior year, CP program has assisted me and figured out what I want to do . . . I decided to take a marketing course and from there I just felt like the creative aspect of marketing would just be really something fun, it is a little fun program that I enjoyed to do that and I thought "Wow! [If I can] make money after this why don't I try to get a degree in that? (Finlay)

In this context, some students contrasted the CP to the IB DP or other forms of secondary school qualifications. Ryan and James stressed the variety of choice and the flexibility within the CP and thus explained that it is especially suitable for those who are not clear about their occupational choices. James described how CP students could increase their careers-related knowledge and how they could compare careers information with their experiences in internships. Frances and Anna thought that the small number of subjects CP students need to take helped them to concentrate on their particular interests. These interests could then, at a later stage, be used as career-related basic orientation.

The internships that we had to do, we got lots of practical work experience, which IB [DP] students don't have. If I remember correctly, it was unique for CP. It helped a lot of people because the people in the IB [DP] only studied theories, and theories, and theories. And they have this vision of them doing some dream job that they are studying towards they don't have the experiences in this dream job. And maybe, even when they get this job they might be unsatisfied with it because it is different. (James)

If you don't know what you want to do I think that the IB [DP] and CP are better choices than A-level which sort of steers you into one direction. If someone wanted to do something practical, and they're not quite sure, I would suggest that the CP is a good option. . . . The CP is quite good in that it exposes you to practical subjects and academic subjects so you can develop an idea about what you actually like doing. . . . my teacher told me if you're not sure what you want to do, do the CP, it is a good choice, because you get a lot of different choices and experiences and you can learn what you want to do. (Ryan)

But the CP, you can - with the IB [DP] you study so many subjects you are not interested in, you have to learn that much. In the CP I also had to learn a lot, but in the end I learnt what I am interested in. (Frances)

On a more cautious note, however, Anna referred to the age at which CP students had to decide which Diploma subjects and Career-related Study to embark on.

Perhaps, another negative is the fact that you have to decide what you want to do, when you are still so young. (Anna)

However, other students explained how they saw the CP as a test bed in which they could try out some career-related and academic ideas.

I struggled at first, because we couldn't make up my mind, I couldn't focus on one thing that I want to do. I wanted to go into psychology first, and that's when I chose the IB psychology course. I enjoyed it, but it wasn't what I'd like to do as a job once I finished. So it allowed me to keep my options open so I can choose other things. So I'm glad I did it. (Victoria)

It's a good program to do if you have a passion for something, you can "test run" it instead of worrying about it later on in life. . . . you take a cooking class and you don't like it, at least you have tried it out early instead of wasting money on time later, by going to culinary school. (Jenny)

James described how, in comparison to DP students, CP students had time to consider different career-related options and thus identify their personal occupational pathways.

[The CP gave me] a lot of time. Because we don't get a lot of homework compared to IB [DP] students, we don't have a lot of work overload. So, what the CP does, with my friends and I, it gave us a lot of time to think about our life. We're not exactly pressured to perform well, we are more pressured to identify where we want to go to in life. (James)

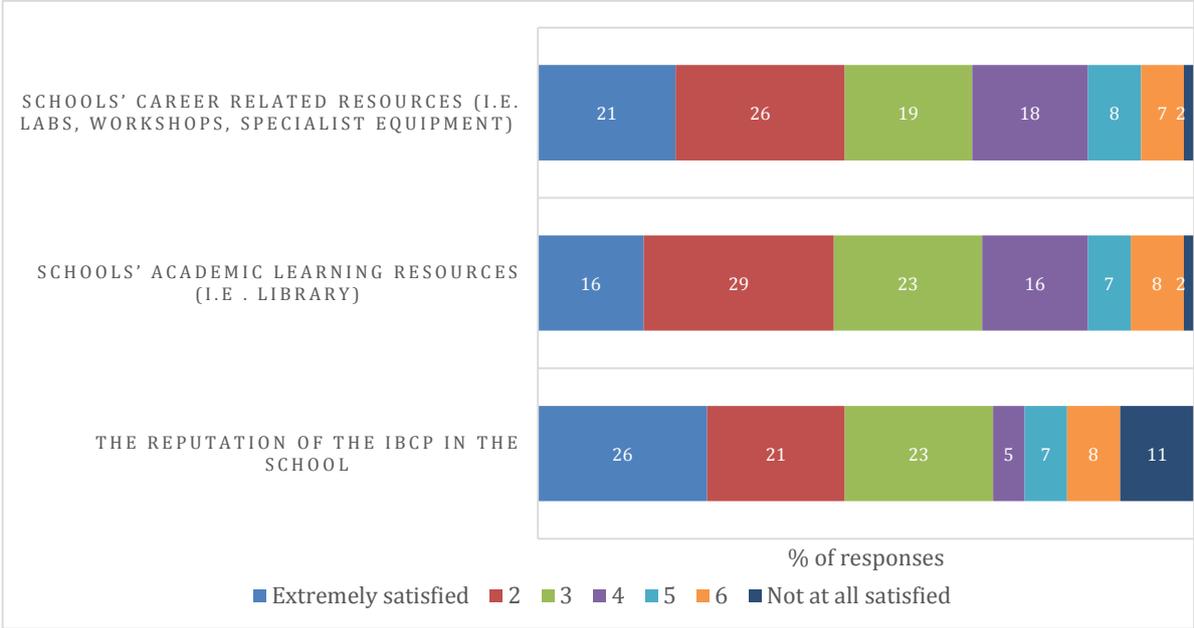
In summary, most students were satisfied with the career guidance they received from schools, and they particularly valued visits to universities, colleges or employers. Criticism from CP alumni addressed the lack of individual advice given to some students, the concentration of advice towards higher education and negligence of alternative career paths, and the omission of job or higher education application skills such as CV writing or job interview techniques.

In general, some young people decide early upon careers they eventually want to embark on, whilst others take longer in their career decisions. These differences were also observed among the CP students in our study. In these contexts, the CP takes up a flexible role, with some students concluding that the CP is especially suitable if students know what they wanted to do as it allows them to specialise early in their chosen career paths. Meanwhile, others said that during the CP they could try different occupational roles that can help in the careers decision-making process.

2.7 Satisfaction with various facets of the CP

As shown in Figure 2.2, the majority of respondents reported they were satisfied with the reputation of the CP in their schools, the career specific resources such as specialist equipment available at the school, and the schools’ academic learning resources (see also: Section 2.3).

Figure 2.2: Satisfaction with selected aspects of the CP



The survey and qualitative interviews with CP alumni also provided insightful feedback concerning students’ satisfaction with other specific aspects of the CP: course organisation, course flexibility and information provided to students about the CP; student views regarding course content and workload; and student reasons for

withdrawing from the CP. Findings regarding these and other facets of the CP are described below.

CP flexibility, organisation and information given to students about the CP

Students appeared generally satisfied with the flexibility and organisation of the CP with nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of survey respondents rating this as good or very good. Many students reported they had experienced innovative teaching methods such as the incorporation of technology into the curriculum, online courses, independent learning and learning in internships.

The equipment and the teaching . . . was really amazing because basically it was more practical learning than theoretical. So at the first week we got a camera in our hand and in the end of the week we have produced short films so it was really nice to learn it this way. (Stephan)

We were each assigned to clients, who were teachers in our school, and we had to design web page for that client, in the case study scenario, and I really got into it. I ended up getting the highest grade, 'A', for that. I enjoyed it so much that I kept working on it, even after had finished, after my teacher had told me that I had done more than enough work! For me, that was the sign that I really enjoyed that side of the IT course. (André)

Our 'Approaches to Learning' class was an online class. We did all the lessons self-paced online, and once a week we had a 45 minute sit down lesson with the teacher. . . . But I think the challenge with this is that we didn't necessarily get enough time to work with our teacher. Part of that was just that they give you so much time in school for the required classes so it's hard to find time, I don't even know if they could have spent more time to it. (Mark)

At the same time, as we see in the above quote from Mark, and further comments provided by Andrea and Victoria, some students were less content with the organisation of the classes and teaching methods.

Sometimes the timetable didn't work exactly with our school timetable, so we had to essentially miss classes. Luckily our teachers were really on board with this and helped us catch up quite well. We were lucky that the teachers at our school were very supportive, but I can see that definitely could be a difficulty. (Anna)

There was a lot of independent study. . . . So, teachers should push more to make that clear to the kids, this is a new type of learning style. Because up to sophomore year it's very straightforward, the teacher just tells you what to do, and to change that for senior year is difficult. I know a lot of kids in my class just got mad at the teacher for not teaching us directly. (Andrea)

Furthermore, complaints were given by several students about a lack of clarity regarding exam content and expectations concerning assessed work.

The other side of the course was more bookwork and learning from a textbook and applying that to an exam at the end. The disappointing thing was, there was quite a lot of stuff on the exam which had not been in the textbook, and

we had been studying this textbook for two years, the textbook didn't match with questions on the paper. It did end up being alright at the end. (André)

Worst part was probably that there was a lot of work, and unclear requirements.... I received a lot of criticism on my project. The CP people came in and looked over our drafts. My teacher told me that they extremely didn't like my work on my business coursework. I wrote about a large pharmaceutical company which had bought out their competition... This put me down a bit! (Isabel)

Finally, some of the students we interviewed criticised the lack of information that they received about the CP before enrolling in the programme. However, as noted earlier (see also: Section 2.1), it was acknowledged this might have been a result of the newness of the programme.

...we didn't know enough about it. The only thing they told us about it was the leaflet that the IB prepared, a flyer and not much more. (Amelie)

I would make the requirements very clear upfront. Not just "you have to take these courses" with suggestions when you might take them. That was a little fuzzy for us. (Andrea)

Content of the studied courses

Taken as a whole, most of the alumni interviewees, such as Simon, indicated that they were satisfied with the complexity of the subjects they studied in the CP.

CP is really good, because it lets you study a profession and also some IB courses, which in my case was IB English and IB Business and management, so it was challenging in a really good way. (Simon)

However, a small number of interviewees suggested that their courses should be more challenging and reflect the subject complexity experienced by IB DP students.

I think mainly it was just some assignments that I thought that just, I hate to say, were kind of pointless. [I would prefer] more time for more rigorous assignments. (Finlay)

I would push the students more, and show them how to do practical tasks. Writing, writing, just like at Uni, and more homework. I would treat them just like IB [DP] students. There is no need to treat them differently, just because they are CP students. I would treat them as IB [DP] students, they all want to enter University after gaining their qualification. (Frances)

Indeed, one interviewee, James, felt that some courses offered as part of the CP added to the reputation of the programme being considered a lower level qualification than the IB DP in some schools.

As a feedback – make the class a bit more challenging. We actually ridiculed some of our classes, so you know, learning how to write a cover letter. . . . So, we did not take the task seriously and we could not take some of the course seriously because of the level that was offered to us. It made us look stupid, in a way, and it made us feel underestimated. (James)

James also elaborated in detail how the low standard they experienced in some classes added to the already low self-esteem of CP students.

Everyone was scoring '6' and '7' and '5'. And rarely did a person score a '4'. So, everyone was doing well but the problem was that everybody was doing well in the classes that we did not even care about. So we were passing some of the classes by getting really good grades by putting very little effort into it. Because of this standard, it is actually really hard to fail the CP. Like, you have to actually want to fail it, in order to fail it. We found out that to pass the CP in class you need a '3'. The IB [DP] need a '4'. These are the type of things that made it hard to take the CP seriously. We were able to bypass a lot of work and still get good grades. Like, I remember, one of my class, I did not put a lot of work in. I think it was 'Approach to Learning' and I still got a '6'. . . . So, these types of things do also affect the students' self-esteem. This fits into an environment that does not let you grow, you get frustrated and you look for an outlet somewhere else. I remember most of my friends, we used to go out a lot and not attend class. And then we'll come back, and we'll score really well in our tests. (James)

Workload

In the main, nearly all alumni interviewees echoed the following comment by Jonathan that workload was not a problematic feature of the CP.

It was not super difficult, although there was a lot of work. (Jonathan)

In their attempts to describe the workload of the CP, students often compared it to that of the IB DP, which was discussed as more academically challenging, but with both programmes described as requiring significant work.

Although I never went through it, I saw what others had to do [for the IB DP], they had to be hard-working, committed. CP is quite tough in itself, but it's not as tough, you have different types of commitments. (Nicole)

Earlier in the year, the IB [DP] kids were stressed, whereas we only had two advanced classes, and we had projects that were spread out. So we could decide, it's Tuesday, I will work on physics, which is really hard and then Monday and Wednesday I'll work on my project. So you could plan your work a little bit more. But in the end, their classes ended and they were just studying, we had all our projects due. We had our paper for 'Approaches to Learning' as well. That was a lot of research in the last two months. (Andrea)

Honestly, they [IB DP] had more academic work, but I think we had just as much work in general, because we had really a lot of work with the career pathway. I think it was just about the same. We were taking college classes. In my career pathway, we took nursing classes at the technical college and we also did a lot of practice. I really think it was about the same. (Ellie)

Withdrawing from the CP

In some schools, the withdrawal rate of CP students was, according to interviewees, quite high. Reasons offered by three alumni interviewees for why students dropped

out of the CP centered on the workload of the CP, extracurricular commitments and personal reasons.

My course had a very small number of people, started off with 25-30 in the first year, and in the second year I was one of 7 or 8. The people who gave up, . . . I think they gave up because the course was very hard. . . . I was ready for the amount of work involved in the CP, but I don't think many of them expected it, and the CP was a safe option for many of the students. (André)

We did have a student drop out of that program for personal reasons, [and one other student] actually dropped out of school altogether. (Anna)

The people who left the program left because they . . . personally, whatever reason, couldn't handle the coursework, whether it was that they were lazy, or had too much on after school. (Mark)

Reputation of the CP

Whilst the majority of survey participants (70 percent) were satisfied with the reputation of the CP within their schools, nearly a third were ambivalent or less positive in their assessment of the CP's standing (see: Figure 2.2.). Concerns were also aired in the alumni interviews where former CP students shared that they felt the qualification was not well known in their own schools and beyond. Additionally, students from three schools reported they believed other students and teachers looked down on them for doing the CP.

The reputation of the CP in the school was horrible. . . . I'm not sure whether it was to do with the people who were there, every single year our grade was blamed for doing stupid things, you know, high school drama. . . . The reputation was a big put down. . . . IB DP had their own cliques and they couldn't associate themselves with us, they called us the stupid kids, because they were doing all the core classes and everything. (Nicole)

...but for some reason, the teachers somehow had the CP students down as troublemakers, to the point where we were not respected by the teachers or the other students in the school. We just had to get by; we had our own stuff to do. . . . Overall, the CP, if the teachers had their heads on straight, it probably would have been an amazing experience, that was the only let down of the two years that I was in the CP. (Nicole)

In the following extended interview extract, James explained to us how this affected the motivation of CP students at his school.

For the first year, a lot of people felt demotivated in the CP. It was only till the second year, that everybody started to pick themselves up. . . . For the first year, most of the students were in denial. Some of my friends almost failed by attendance, they never came to the class. And these were a lot of problems that the teachers seemed to overlook. You can't really force these type of things for people to accept the habit. They have to want to succeed in the CP and we did address the issue with the CP Co-ordinator, that we were being treated like trash, by some lecturers and some students, because of the choice that we made, the course that we were stuck with. That we just become targets. (James)

There is this mentality, because of the way the IB people treat us, some of my lecturers also treated us as quite discriminately, just because we were CP students, so it hit people in their esteem area quite badly. . . . The people who are in CP are not exactly like idiots, they are just lazy. And, the only way you can make lazy people work is if you inspire them. Because if you try and force change onto them. Which some teachers try to do, and they failed miserably. They will change for a few days and then they will fall back. There should be a class that helps them to stay motivated. . . . (James)

James also outlined the secondary school programme “pecking order” in his school.

They were like, you know, if you are a failure, you’ll go to CP. That is the thing. If you fail the IB [DP] you’ll go into CP. And if you fail CP you’ll get your high school diploma. (James)

However, according to James, there were also positive outcomes of the low reputation of the course—the creation of teamwork and solidarity among his fellow CP students.

We also adopted a new attitude of no longer being the victim. In the second year, . . . we wanted to prove the IB people and the lecturers who looked down upon us that we were more than capable of what they say [working hard], and we wanted to prove them that we were unique, and we could be better than that. In the second year, we were motivated to show the IB students that we were better than them, maybe not academically, but in terms of internships and practical knowledge, how we apply ourselves, rather than trying to compete on a ground that we can’t win. . . . In my class, when we graduated, we had 100% pass rate. So no one was left behind either.

The people in the CP were closer than the IB DP people. We all shared the same classes so we were not divided. And that gave us a sense of, you know, we are all in this together. And actually, it helped us motivate one another to study or to do the project. And it gave us a sense of community. . . . So we hang out with one another. We do a lot of activities together rather than just going home and separating our lives. (James)

To summarize, the majority of CP students were content with the reputation of the CP in their schools, the schools’ provision of career specific equipment and resources, and academic learning resources. Similarly, course flexibility and organisation, course workload and the content of the CP were generally not seen as problematic. Points of criticism that were mentioned by some students referred to unclear communication about course requirements and a lack of information being provided about the CP to students. Several students reported that a negative competitiveness existed between CP and IB DP students and that the CP suffered from a second-tier status in some schools.

2.8 Would they do the CP again?

In total, 71 percent of the survey respondents in our study stated that they would choose to undertake the CP again; 8 percent said that they would undertake the full

IB DP instead; and 8 percent said they would undertake individual DP subjects⁷. A further 8 percent were not sure what they would do; 3 percent indicated they would study for another secondary school qualification; and 3 percent would not undertake a secondary school qualification at all.

Reasons given by survey respondents who indicated they would have preferred not to undertake the CP included:

- The CP had not been accepted as an entry qualification to higher education (4 students);
- Dissatisfaction with the organization of the CP at their particular school (4 students);
- Poor reputation of the CP within the school (2 students);
- Change of individual career ideas (2 students); and
- A belief that the CP did not prepare students for higher education (1 student).

Survey respondents were also asked which aspects of the CP they felt needed improvement⁸. Five students stated that they thought that there was no need to improve anything. Thirty-six other survey respondents took the opportunity to suggest the following areas for improvement:

- More information needed within school about the CP including communication of programme requirements (17 students);
- Better organisation of the CP within the school (e.g., more resources, CP implementation being incompatible with class structure) (12 students);
- Individual teachers, subject content and teaching methods (7 survey);
- Better external communication and recognition of the CP among HEIs and employers (7 students); and
- Broader choice of subjects including career-related subjects (4 students).

Among the 20 students who took part in the qualitative interviews, 14 said that they would choose to undertake the CP again.

I found it [the CP] quite amazing and I feel really lucky to have done it. (Anna)

Yes, Ma'am, I would definitely do it again. (Ellie)

For me, the CP was probably the most enjoyable two years that I had in my entire academic history. It brought out the best in me in the way that it gave me a lot of freedom. (James)

Two alumni interviewees were ambivalent on whether they would do the CP again. Reflecting points raised previously, they expressed concerns about the lack of information before embarking on the programme and problems in gaining access to the universities of their choice.

⁷ N = 62

⁸ Open-ended question, N = 41

It's not something I regret, I just think we didn't know enough about it. The only thing they told us about it was the leaflet that the IB prepared, a flyer and not much more. (Amelie)

I'm not really sure... People who did the IB [DP] in my school got offers with lower grades. . . . I think it is more difficult to get into the top universities with a CP. I'm not sure it is possible to get into the Oxbridge unis. (Ryan)

However, two students were unambiguous that they regretted completing the CP and said they would have undertaken A levels or the IB DP instead.

...no, to be honest I really don't think there's any reason to choose CP over A-levels. Especially because you don't have nearly as much choice of CP subjects, as you do with A-levels. And the CP is not flexible, you cannot decide to drop a subject or change a subject. (André)

Frankly, I wish I had done the whole program, [the IB DP]. . . . I think it was very beneficial to them [IB DP students], they all got pretty much outright into any school they wanted to. (Alfred)

To summarize, the majority of students in our study would have done the CP again. Main reasons mentioned by those who would have embarked on a different qualification were problems in entering their chosen higher education institutions with the CP qualification and school specific problems.

3. Post-secondary Destinations

The following chapter documents the post-secondary destinations of survey participants and investigates student perceptions regarding the contribution of the CP to these outcomes. The first section of this chapter (3.1) outlines the activities survey respondents were engaged in after their graduation from school, recording how many students entered specific paths such as higher education, career-related training or employment. Skills and knowledge gained in the CP and its usefulness for their current paths are topics discussed in the second section (3.2), followed by students' HEI experiences (3.3) and experiences in having the CP recognised as an entry qualification to higher education or employment (3.4). The next sections describe in detail students' experiences in career-related training or apprenticeships (3.5), in employment (3.6) and in unemployment (3.7). These sections also highlight why students entered their respective activities; if their CP certificates were accepted as an entry qualification; if they feel prepared for their activities; and how they were coping in their current activities. Finally, section 3.8 examines students' future plans, and the contribution of the CP to students' pathways is discussed.

As a preamble to this section, it is important to note that the kind of secondary school qualification students acquire is only one of many features which determine whether students manage to follow their career-related ideas and enter their first-choice HEI or career-related training on their chosen career paths. Depending on national pathways to higher education (HE) (see section 4.2), admissions officers to higher education not only look at the type of high school qualification but also at the students' grades, their extracurricular activities, college admissions, interviews, and in some cases, standardized test scores. Students' success in applying for career-related training or employment, similar to other applicants, depends on the sectoral labour market. Moreover, in the current recessionary conditions experienced in some countries, it can be hard for many young people to enter their chosen apprenticeships or employment.

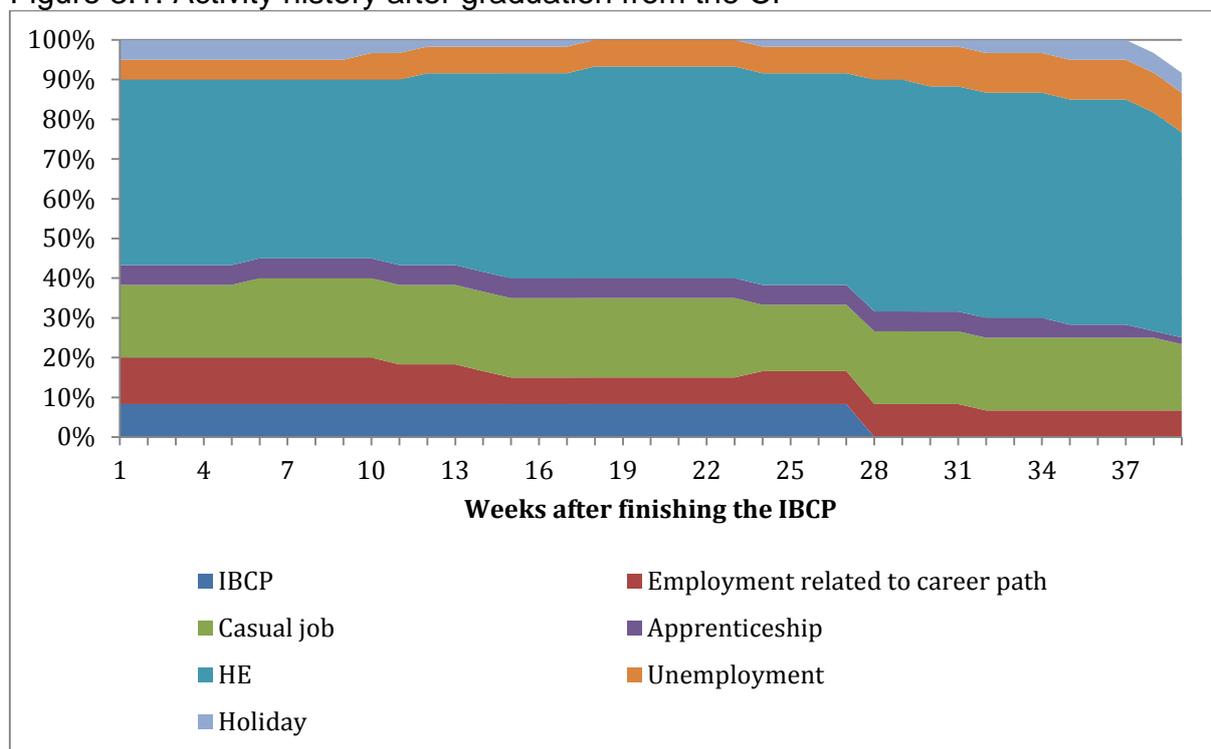
3.1 Activity history

At the time of the survey, more than half of all respondents had entered higher education (53 percent). A further 8 percent of all survey respondents reported that they were in employment related to their intended career paths, and 21 percent were engaged in casual jobs. The remainder were engaged in apprenticeships or career-related training (3 participants), unemployed (10 percent), or were doing something else (5 percent), such as compulsory military service or long-term holidays. Sixteen percent of all respondents considered leaving their current activity because:

- They were trying to enter higher education,
- They were unemployed,
- They just would like to change, or in one case,
- They wanted to improve their work conditions.

Figure 3.1 below shows the activity changes during the first year after May 2014 when most students had finished the CP.

Figure 3.1: Activity history after graduation from the CP



N = 60

The activity history depicted above covers the period from 31st of May 2014 to 28th of February 2015. Directly after finishing the CP in May 2014, 47 percent of students entered higher education. This figure increased to 55 percent by February 2015. Seventeen percent of students started to work in a casual job: this figure increased to 20 percent by August 2014, then decreased again to 17 percent by February. Immediately after the CP, about 12 percent were in a job related to their career paths, but this figure decreased over time to 8 percent. Five percent of all students said they were unemployed in the first weeks after finishing the CP, and this figure increased to ten percent by February 2015. Three students (representing 5 percent of the responders to the activity-history questions) started apprenticeships after their CPs. The fluctuation between activities describes, in most cases, typical post-secondary school pathways. For example, it is not unusual that young people begin by working in a casual summer job before entering higher education. Many young people use these first months to gain more insights into their chosen career paths, and casual jobs can be a way to obtain more first-hand information. Casual jobs can also act as “stepping stones” (de Graaf-Zijl et al., 2011) or as a “stopgap” (Anderson et al., 2006) before moving on to employment related to career paths or into education or training.

3.2 Skills and competencies

Students, both in the survey and in the alumni qualitative interviews, were asked if the CP had enabled them to develop a number of specific types of skills that can contribute to post-secondary success. Among other things, the term “cognitive competencies” captures both students’ knowledge and understanding gained in academic subjects such as mathematics or English. Many of the alumni

interviewees, such as Victoria and Ellie, described how their knowledge and skills in CP academic subjects had helped them in their higher education studies (see also 3.4).

...with all the Maths and English skills that I gained it has really helped me a lot. I still have to do functional skills at college but with the skills that I have already learnt that the CP, it's much easier. (Victoria)

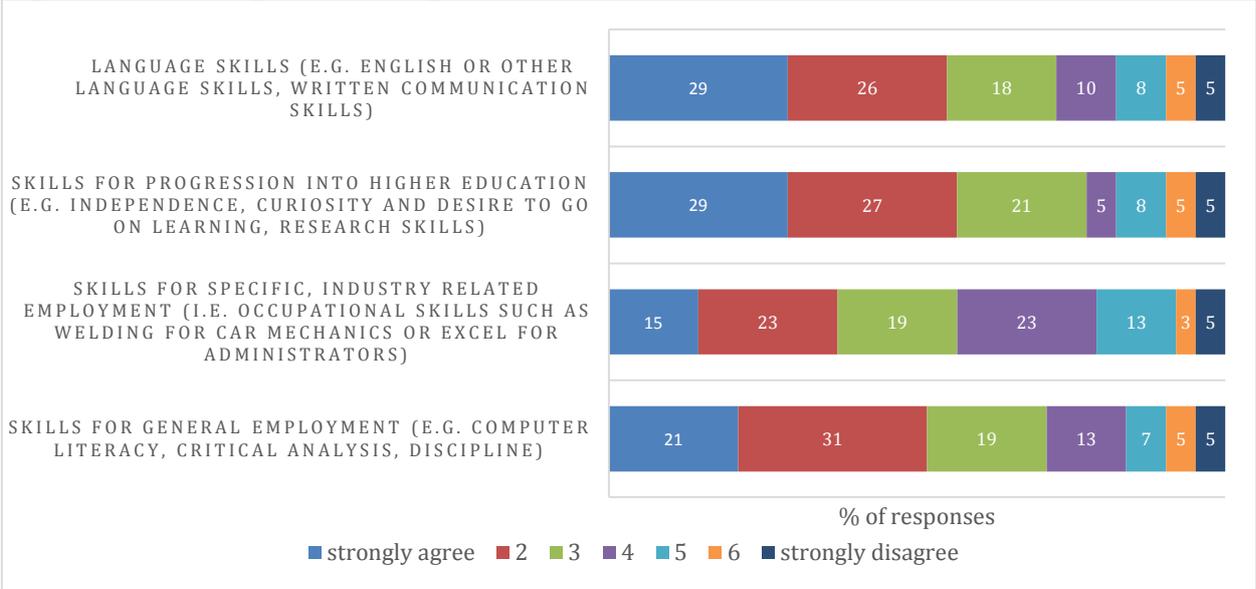
We have a lot of Maths in college and school really prepared me well for that. I was able to get an 'A' at my statistics class because I was prepared for it by my maths class [at school]. (Ellie)

Additionally, in the survey, students were asked the extent to which they had gained from the CP a number of skills that are collectively examples of “functional competencies” (Figure 3.2). For the purposes of this study, these were differentiated as language skills, skills for progression into higher education, skills for specific industry-related employment and skills for general employment⁹. 71 percent of survey respondents agreed that they had gained useful language skills from the CP. Andrea explained how she had benefited from her essay writing skills whilst André said he had also improved his presentation and writing skills.

In college our longest paper is 1000 words, many of my classmates complain, oh 1000 words, but I had to write on demand essays of 1000 words! Just having the confidence and the skill to sit down and write those is great. Thanks to it, I'm really comfortable with technical writing so I got the upper hand on technical writing. (Andrea)

The Business management course was quite useful for presentation skills and essay writing skills. (André)

Figure 3.2: Skills gained during the CP



⁹ This classification, however, is not exclusive: many skills which were classified in one category such as language skills can also be classified as skills for progression into higher education or for general employment.

When asked if they had gained skills for progression into higher education, 77 percent of respondents agreed that they had acquired these types of skills from the CP. Some students, such as Mark, explained how their familiarity with IT skills for online learning had helped them in their current course.

A lot of universities now, especially big ones, require you to take certain classes online in freshman year, and a lot of people are not used to online learning. That was a really big advantage, I have done this already and I know how it works so it's a lot easier. (Mark)

Interviewees, such as Alfred, Eric and Simon, also described to us how their CP studies had contributed to their time management, organisation and research skills, especially in the Reflective Project.

The first thing I was taught was essentially to write down absolutely everything you had to do, then right next to it, write down when it was due, and what time it was due, and then prioritise that way. (Alfred).

We also learned time management, organisational skills, because we had a lot of time for the Reflective Project, but we had to organise ourselves. And in the end, if you didn't work, there was no way to finish. (Eric)

[The Reflective Project] helped me a lot, because the criteria was to find something with the argument that is ethical, so I had to find like millions of websites and they all said that it's wrong and I also needed those which argued that it's not wrong. (Simon)

A smaller proportion of students, 57 percent, felt they had gained specific occupational skills compared with 71 percent who agreed they had obtained skills for general employment. An associated skill that was highly valued by James, and has been mentioned elsewhere, was using networking to make connections.

I want to start building a network here. I learned at the CP that connections do help a lot. It will help me in the long run, regarding internships and other favours that you will need. . . . So, this is why I am building my network here. (James)

Finally, a collection of skills was described by the CP interviewees that can be broadly grouped as being examples of gains in social competencies. For instance, Alfred and Victoria spoke of enhancing their interpersonal skills, and Ellie felt she had overcome fears associated with public speaking.

We did a lot of group projects in our English class, it was hard, but it was really helpful. In my first year at High School I was very shy and towards the end, I was captain of many teams and many clubs. I think it really helped me open up towards communication skills and people skills. (Alfred)

...but it was the people skills that I really struggled with. When I did the CP, when I had my art exam, it was all speaking, and it really helped me build up my confidence, so I am a whole lot better now, when I'm talking to new people! (Victoria)

Also of course presentations, we had to do a lot of that! That made me a better speaker, with these presentations I faced my fears, I've had to present in front of audiences many times. (Ellie)

Furthermore, Mark described in detail how he and his classmates had developed the ability to work well with others and function constructively in a group.

They also taught us how to be respectful, in the beginning we had issues with respect by the students towards the people working there, a lot of boys are really close minded and immature, arguing with a trainer, just being pathetic, and you could see the difference in a few months. They taught you how to have respect. . . . Our teacher held us to a very high standard. She really expected us to work, be on time, always ready to go, in the uniform, stuff like that. She really helped. (Mark)

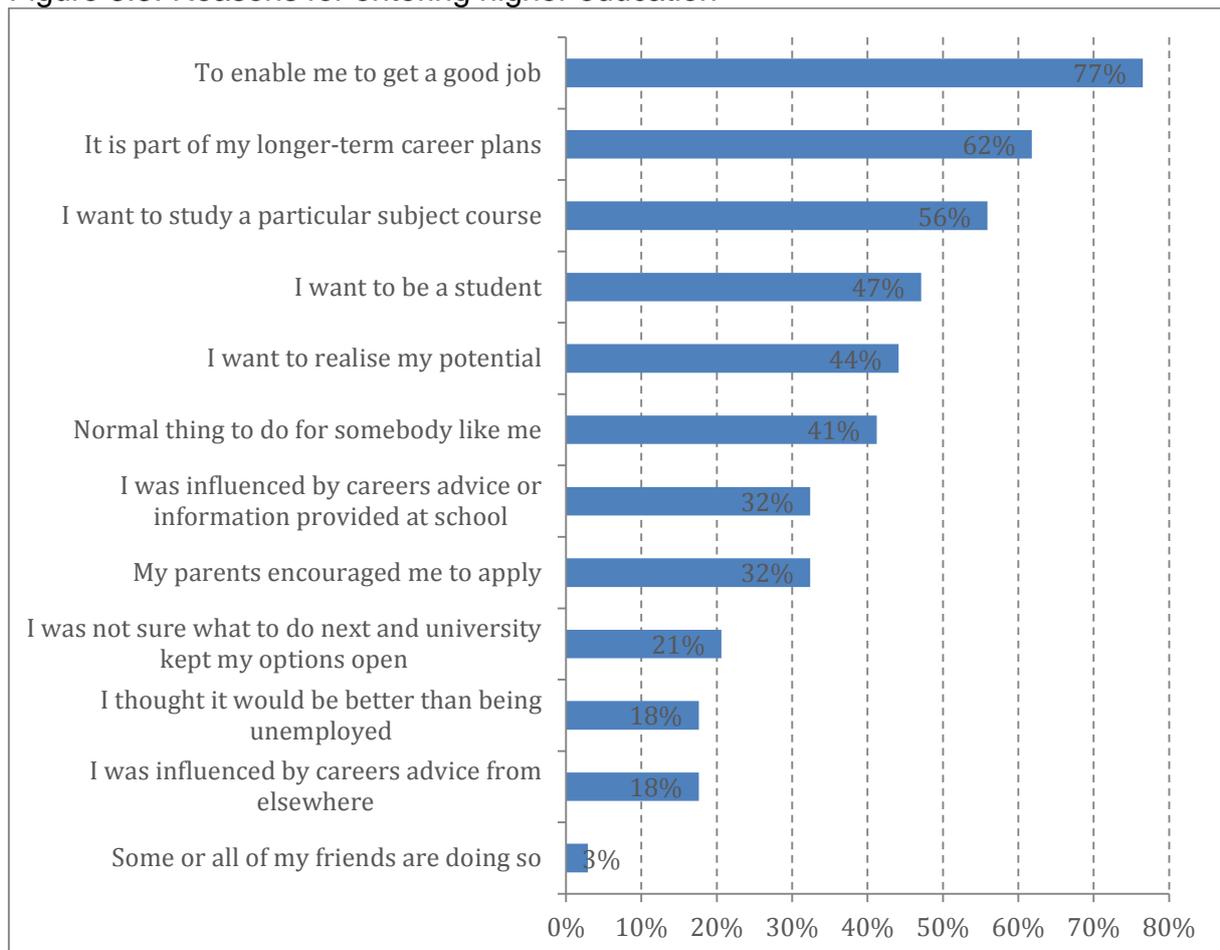
To summarize, the majority of students in the survey and alumni interviews agreed that the CP had enabled the development of skills that contribute to post-secondary success. Participants said they had increased their language skills, their skills for progression into higher education and their skills for general employment. A lower proportion agreed they had obtained skills for specific industry-related employment. In the qualitative interviews, students described positive benefits of the CP in areas such as writing skills, time management, networking and improved social competence.

3.3 Higher education, community college or other form of higher education

More than half of all survey respondents (58 percent) enrolled in higher education after completing the CP, and most of this group were still studying when completing the survey. One student entered a casual job after leaving higher education, and one graduate became unemployed after dropping out of a community college. Nearly all respondents from the USA had entered higher education, whereas approximately half of the UK CP survey respondents did so.

All survey respondents who had entered higher education were asked about their reasons for doing so. As can be seen in Figure 3.3, the most frequently stated reasons were career-related (“to enable me to get a good job” and “it is part of my longer-term career plans”). Another important motive for entering higher education, which more than half of all higher education students gave, was that they wanted to study a particular subject course. These results are similar in nature to a recent survey of UK university applicants that used the same items in Figure 3.3 and returned like responses as those reported by CP respondents (Purcell et al., 2008).

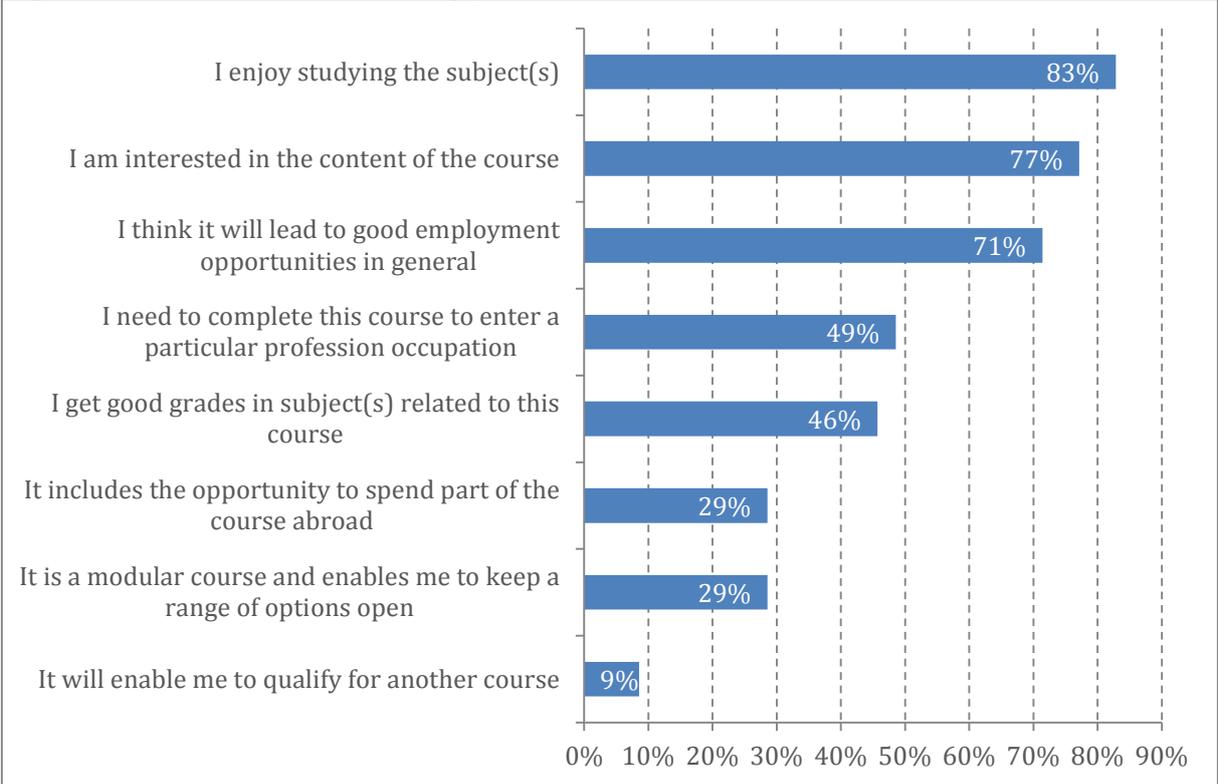
Figure 3.3: Reasons for entering higher education



HE students only (N = 36); Note: This is a multi-response question.

When asked about the reasons for studying their particular courses (Figure 3.4), more than three-quarters stated that they enjoyed studying the subject(s) associated with the course and that they were interested in the content of the course. A larger proportion of students indicated they thought their courses would lead to good employment opportunities in general than those who indicated they needed to complete their courses to enter a particular profession or occupation.

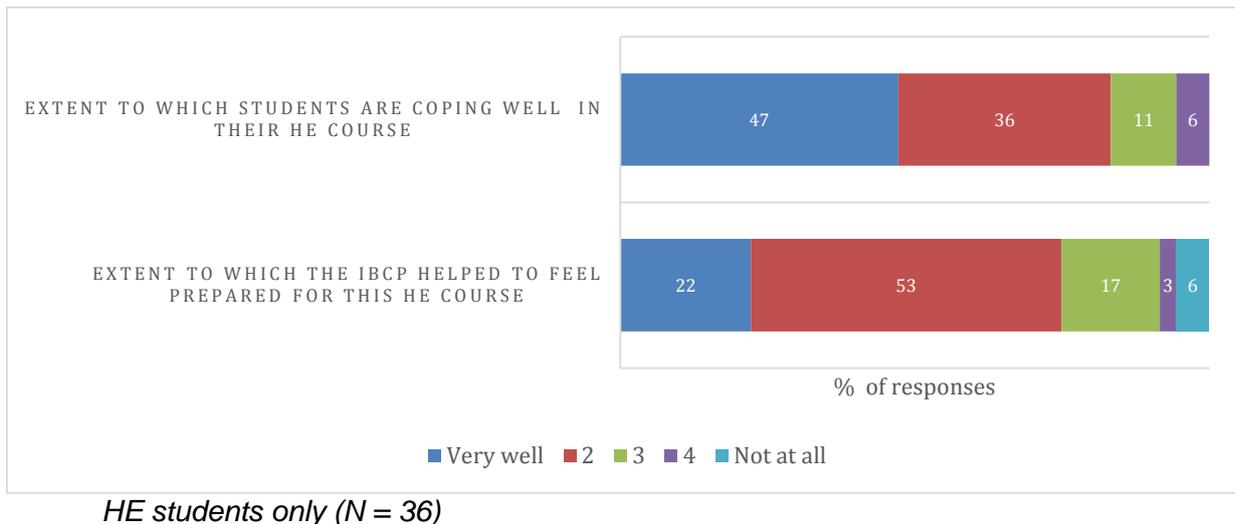
Figure 3.4: Reasons for entering particular course



Note: This is a multi-response question.

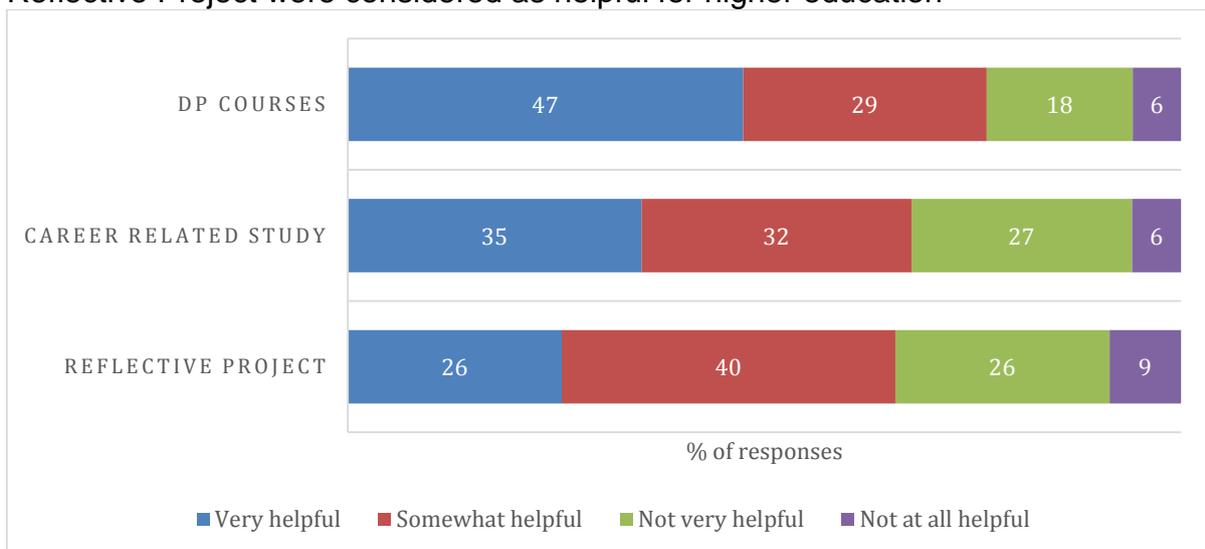
The CP survey respondents were also asked if they were coping well in their higher education courses and if they felt the CP had helped them to feel prepared for the course (Figure 3.5). Eighty-three percent of this group indicated that they were coping well in their HE courses, and 75 percent said that they felt the CP had helped them to feel prepared for their current higher education courses.

Figure 3.5: Coping with HE courses and preparation for this HE course



The higher education survey completers were next invited to rate how helpful Diploma courses, the Career-related Study and the Reflective Project were for their current studies (Figure 3.6). Seventy-seven percent rated Diploma courses as helpful; the Career-related Study and the Reflective Project were perceived as helpful by two thirds of the higher education CP respondents.

Figure 3.6: Extent to which Diploma courses, the Career-related Study and the Reflective Project were considered as helpful for higher education



These results also reflect comments offered by students in the qualitative interviews. Knowledge, competencies and skills acquired during their DP courses were seen as particularly helpful to cope with the requirements of higher education. Students highlighted that they felt they had the “upper hand” (Isabel) as they already had relevant skills for HE and were prepared for a larger workload.

Obviously, at times I still get nervous about assignments, but I already know how submitting things works, I definitely had a great edge thanks to the CP. (Anna)

I feel like I do to have an advantage on it. . . . I'm taking the more challenging classes and I feel that the CP helped me. (Ellie)

...the assignments we did prepared us for a bigger workload than an average college assignments. (Erik)

The CP program for me was a good pathway into college for me because I was able to transfer all the skills I got there into all my classes in college. (Alfred)

However, some students were less content and felt disadvantaged when compared with the preparation for higher education of IB DP students.

And the worst thing is, that you do not get prepared for university at all, really, zero preparation. So, I mean, with reading and writing and so on. So, if somebody aims to study on a higher level, then it is better to get an IB [DP], then I would not recommend the CP. So, this would certainly be a way to improve the CP. It is an aim that you can enter higher education after the CP, but we really did not get prepared for that. . . . For example, with homework. For essays, or so, we could just take one website and copy the content. Whilst IB [DP] students, they really had to research, and read, and so. Just like at university. (Frances)

... the CP did not, in any way, prepare me for college. I had to learn nearly everything from scratch (i.e. how to study smarter, how to create an effective study schedule, how to manage a difficult workload). I was very disappointed with the preparation I received for university in the CP, compared to the preparation students received taking the IB. Yes, college is an entirely different and, sometimes, unpredictable experience for most, however, I believe if I were to have taken the IB [DP] over the CP, I would've been more successful in my studies at university, and I would've gotten into the school I initially wanted. (Survey respondent, USA)

In summary, more than half of all CP students had entered higher education after finishing secondary school. Most frequently mentioned reasons for entering higher education were related to future employment and career plans. The particular courses of study were chosen because students enjoyed the subjects and the content of the courses. In general, most students felt that the CP had prepared them well for their HE courses and that they were coping well. Diploma courses were regarded as especially helpful for HE. However, a majority also said that the Career-related Study and the Reflective Project had been helpful. Most students reported that their knowledge about the content of the courses, together with their research skills, had helped them in their current studies. Some students, nevertheless, were more critical and did not feel that they had acquired the necessary writing and research skills to be prepared for higher education.

3.4 Application to higher education or employment

A sizeable majority of all survey respondents, 71 percent, indicated that their CP certificates were recognised by admissions officers or employers; however, an assortment of issues were reported concerning recognition of the programme.

Higher education

Survey respondents who indicated they had entered higher education were asked if they had experienced problems in the application process (Table 3.1). While two-thirds said that those responsible for student admissions had understood the skills and knowledge they had acquired and that the CP certificate had been accepted as a secondary school qualification, a large proportion experienced problems in the application process.

Table 3.1: Acceptance of the CP certificate as an entry qualification to higher education

	Yes	No
Those responsible for student admissions understood the kinds of skills and knowledge you acquired during the CP	67%	33 %
Those responsible for student admissions accepted the CP certificate as secondary school qualification	69%	31 %
Experienced particular problems when applying for this higher education course	83%	17 %

HE students only (N = 36)

Among the CP alumni interviewees in our study, fifteen students had applied to higher education, and of these, four students (Ryan, Finlay, Anna and Ellie) did not experience any kind of barriers to having their CP certificates accepted. Anna explained that before entering the CP she met up with university officials [who also provided the Career-related Study] to confirm she was able to enrol in the institution.

... and they said definitely, and gave us a choice of three different dual degrees that we could do together with creative industries. (Anna)

Finlay and Mark felt that they profited from the IB brand and suggested that their higher education institutions did not understand the differences between DP and CP.

I don't think they did [fully understand what the CP is]. . . . the title of IB program also help, really helped for me. (Finlay)

I have a huge advantage with CP. . . . when colleges see "IB anything", they know you've put in a lot of work. . . . The admissions [officer was] interested in my project, they were very surprised, "You made a video!" A lot of universities now don't just look for grades, but for a very well rounded person. (Mark)

Students also recalled how schools had helped them explain the CP to admissions officers. Jenny and Mark, for example, were provided with a pamphlet by their schools to add to their HEI applications. Other students, however, said they were required to explain in detail the amount of work undertaken to complete the CP.

But in the interview, the interviewer asked me, like, so, the CP, how many UCAS¹⁰ points is this equivalent to? I had to give him a basis to compare. If you go to the good universities, you have to explain to them what it is. . . . And then, I had a list, and I referred back to the list to convert the UCAS points, how many UCAS points

¹⁰ In the UK, UCAS tariff points are a numerical score allocated to selected qualifications using an A level benchmark, see also 4.2.

each of them worth, I told them that this IB subject is worth that many UCAS points, this BTEC subject is that many UCAS points. . . . I had to give a better understanding. (Ryan)

I spelled it out for them. The university did know what IB was and they do recognise 'Project Lead The Way', so I said there is this new program that kind of links the two. I kind of figured that the University might not know about it because it's a new program so I make sure to explain when I was applying. (Andrea)

André and Amelie described their disappointment regarding the lack of sufficient UCAS tariff points they accrued as a result of their CP studies.

The only real problem I found with the CP was that it didn't give me enough UCAS points to get to anywhere. I didn't know this before I started the course. . . . Even though I did quite well, and my friends, they also got similar grades, we just couldn't get anywhere. . . . I had to do an extra year and pay lots of money for it. (..) I don't really see why the UCAS points on the CP are so low! . . . It was extremely disappointing! . . . The CP was probably harder than A-levels, so I don't understand how it could have fewer UCAS points, only a fraction of what you are meant to have, in order to apply for university. It just doesn't seem right. (André)

One reason why I really, really wouldn't recommend it to someone is UCAS points - shocking! The UCAS points are absolutely awful if you don't do well. For UCAS points, I think the CP is a joke. (Amelie)

Moreover, Ryan and André, both UK students, said that they did not feel sufficiently informed about the accreditation of the CP and thought it was easier to access higher education with a more recognised qualification than the CP. This view was also articulated by a survey respondent from the USA.

They really should provide more information about what universities you could get in. I remember when I was choosing university, I had a brochure of the UCL, University College London, and I thought that was really cool, it's quite high for architecture. But I emailed them and I found out that they don't accept the CP, so I didn't put them in as one of my choices. But the fact is that I didn't know that when I picked the CP and it could have been my fault for not researching it at the time, but it would be very helpful, if they let students know and make things like this clear. (Ryan)

There was definitely not enough information! Obviously, when I went for my interview with them [the school that offered the CP], I asked them how is it similar to AS levels, can I get to university after that, and they said yes. So because I trusted them, I didn't think I needed to look into it, because my teachers that I have known for many years, told me, you, you will get into university if you do well. And I got Bs on everything and it wasn't enough to scrape into a half decent university, if you see what I mean. (André).

...my primary-choice university did not recognize the CP and disregarded it in my application, even though I received a perfect score on my BTEC Computer Science transcript. The CP is great, but the IB [DP] has more credibility and

recognition, and is recognized as a superior course by many (American) universities. (Survey respondent, USA)

Lastly, interviewees such as Ryan felt that the CP was not designed for students to enter highly ranked universities. However, others such as James and Nicole indicated they were not aiming for these types of HEIs.

I think it is more difficult to get into the top universities with a CP. I'm not sure it is possible to get into the Oxbridge unis. Because the CP entails BTECs and those universities reject BTECs. (Ryan)

So, although it did not help me in the way that I was able to join a top notch university. . . . I was able to enter my school without a lot of problems because of my CV. (James)

I'm not looking to study in a big university, I just want to pursue my dream of making films... (Nicole)

Employment

At the time of the student survey, nine respondents had experienced employment related to their career plans. Most of these students stated that they did not need any previous qualification for this employment. Those respondents who needed a particular qualification indicated previous work experience or their Career-related Studies provided this. Five of those who had entered employment reported that they used the knowledge acquired during the CP in their work positions, and three specifically singled out calculation skills, language skills (English), communication skills, professional writing skills and critical thinking skills acquired from the CP.

According to this group of students, most employers did not understand the kinds of skills and knowledge they had acquired during their CP studies. However, in five cases, the employer accepted the CP as a secondary school qualification, and for two students, the CP had been helpful because "It made me a stronger candidate for the position" (survey respondent). At the same time, others reported that the CP did not make a difference in getting the job.

In summary, the majority of CP students who applied to higher education managed to gain an HEI place. While students generally felt that HE admissions officers accepted the CP certificate as a secondary school qualification, a large portion experienced problems in the application process. Most of the students had to provide additional information about the CP in the application process. Some said that they had benefited from the reputation of the International Baccalaureate brand. Several students reported issues associated with the CP certificate not being accepted by HEIs or were disappointed by lower than expected UCAS tariff points. At the time of the study, only a small group of students had applied to enter employment according to their career plans, and for the majority of these students, a previous qualification was not necessary.

3.5 Career-related college / apprenticeship

Only three survey respondents entered a career-related college or apprenticeship after completing the CP, and at the time of the survey, only two were still engaged in

the career-related training. The student who had already completed his/her training went on to work in a casual job.

Reasons given by this small group for undertaking the career-related training were (multiple responses):

- It allows me to keep my options about the future open (2 responses);
- I liked the idea of getting a job and doing training at the same time (2 responses);
- It provides the qualifications you need to enter certain occupations (2 responses); and
- I have good career prospects on completing the course (1 response).

In all three cases, the CP certificate was accepted as a secondary school qualification. Two respondents stated that the CP had not made a difference in getting the position, whilst one stated that the CP had been helpful in finding the career-related training because it “showed I had a variety of skills” (survey respondent).

Only one respondent in the qualitative interviews (Victoria) stated that she was currently undertaking career-related training at a local college, and even though she was positive about her career progression, she was concerned about vacancies for apprenticeships.

Things are going really well at the minute. I'm at . . . College, finishing my B-Tech level 3 in animal management and I'm looking for animal management apprenticeships to go on to after I finish. If I can't get an apprenticeship, I might try a job working with [a pet shop]. There aren't many options for internships though, just a few at the moment. Every time I look, I can't seem to find a lot. (Victoria)

Victoria reported that her CP had helped her in entering the career-related training.

Yes, it did help actually. They asked me what I did before I came into the college and I said I had a CP qualification. They said that was really good because that way they knew I had done some A-levels and the BTECs as well. (Victoria)

To summarize, very few students in our study had entered career-related education or training after their CP studies. Three students who said they had done so used the skills acquired during the CP and indicated that their CP certificate was recognised by the career-related college/apprenticeship provider.

3.6 Employment

As we have noted in previous sections, nine of the survey respondents in our study had experienced employment related to their career plans. In response to a multi-choice question asking CP alumni to indicate the main reasons for taking up their jobs, respondents answered in the following ways:

- It offered interesting work (5 responses);
- It is better than being unemployed (4 responses);
- It suits me in the short term (3 responses);

- To gain experience in order to obtain the type of job I really want (3 responses);
- It was exactly the type of work I wanted (2 responses);
- I was already working for this employer (2 responses);
- I wanted to work in this locality/region (2 responses);
- The salary level was attractive (1 response); or
- It offered job security (1 response).

Whilst the majority of these survey respondents indicated they were coping (very) well in their positions, there were a range of views about whether or not the CP had helped them to feel prepared for their employment. On a 1–5 scale where a rating of 1 is “very helpful” and 5 is “not helpful at all,” two students rated the CP with a 2, three students with a 3 and three students with a 4. One student did not respond to the question.

Among our CP interviewees, four CP alumni indicated they worked in jobs related to their career paths. Some of these students were considerably older than other interviewees and had gained career-related training and/or work experience before entering the CP. Nicole had worked in casual jobs after her CP and was, at the time of her qualitative interview, applying to study at a university. She explained how she had used the skills and knowledge she acquired during the CP for work purposes. She felt that her CP had prepared her mainly for employment rather than higher education; however, her statement is limited by the fact that she did not have any personal experiences with higher education.

The CP prepares you mainly for work purposes; it does not necessarily prepare you for university life. Because you are doing a lot of internships, experiencing different job offers and opportunities, so this is why it is mainly good for work purposes rather than University. I have noticed that it has helped me a lot. The big advantage in doing a CP is that I could get jobs . . . with my certificate. (Nicole)

Stephan, a mature student, who returned to his non-English speaking native country, explained how he found skill-appropriate employment both due to his English language skills and his career-related filmmaking skills.

I am a video reviewer at . . . basically I got there I found a placement on the internet and I called a guy and the guy was American. . . . It was really easy to find a connection with him because here in [country] less people talk English and the less people talk with really bad accents and it's very hard to understand what they want to tell. He really likes the idea that I film in English and I got other jobs because of that and he notices the CP, he didn't know what it is but he said that he heard about it before. . . . there were British and Americans and they needed assistants who can speak fluent English and I was one of their assistants. (Stephan)

To summarize, nine students had entered skill appropriate employment after finishing their CP. The most important reason for accepting their current jobs was that the jobs offered interesting work. There were mixed views among survey and interview respondents regarding how helpful the CP had been in preparing them for their current employment positions.

3.7 Unemployment

At the time of the survey, 10 percent of the sample were unemployed. One had just left his compulsory army service. The others were unemployed because (multiple responses):

- They applied for some jobs but their CP certificates were not recognised by the employers (1 response);
- Suitable work was unavailable or hard to find (3 responses);
- They had an illness or disability (1 response); or
- They lacked transportation to or from work (1 response).

It is problematic to compare this figure with national figures because of the small numbers of the CP survey. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that in 2013, 15.8 percent of young people in the USA, 20.3 percent of young people in the UK, 19.6 percent of Finnish young people and 7.8 percent of German young people were classified as unemployed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)¹¹. In this context, it is not surprising that some CP students did not find access to higher or further education, career-related training or employment.

One student described it as follows:

...Shitty situation with jobs. (Survey respondent)

The following two quotes explain how students first enjoyed their free time after graduation from school. However, after a certain period of time, they were becoming more conscious of their situation.

Unemployment is something I consider as a decent holiday from all the studying and work, but a long-term one isn't a good thing anymore. (Survey respondent)

Finished school a year ago, May 2014. I've been trying to find a job. . . . But I didn't mind being unemployed so much because college was very tough on my health. I have applied for 6 jobs, no luck so far. (Eric)

In summary, 10 percent of CP students experienced unemployment after their CP studies. The main reason for their current unemployment was the lack of job vacancies. However, it is too early to evaluate these students' pathways as they might yet enter higher education or career-related training.

3.8 CPs' contribution to students' pathways and future plans

Of all survey respondents, 73 percent considered the time after completing their CP studies as successful; 18 percent could not decide, and the remainder said that the time had been unsuccessful¹². Of those who said that they considered the time after CP graduation as successful (45 participants), 37 said that it had to do with the CP; and 5 said that they considered the time as successful but the CP did not have any impact on it. Typical responses for those who had considered their time as successful were as follows:

¹¹ http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/WCMS_244259/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 25-09-15)

¹² N = 62

Definitely, it's endowed me with confidence within myself and a motivation to push hard to achieve my goals. (Survey respondent)

It helped me develop the responsibility necessary to succeed. (Survey respondent)

It gave me the skills to know how to communicate with my teachers, gave me time management skills, taught me how to deal with stress, showed me that grades are not everything. It is what you do with the information you learn and how you apply it that counts (Andrea)

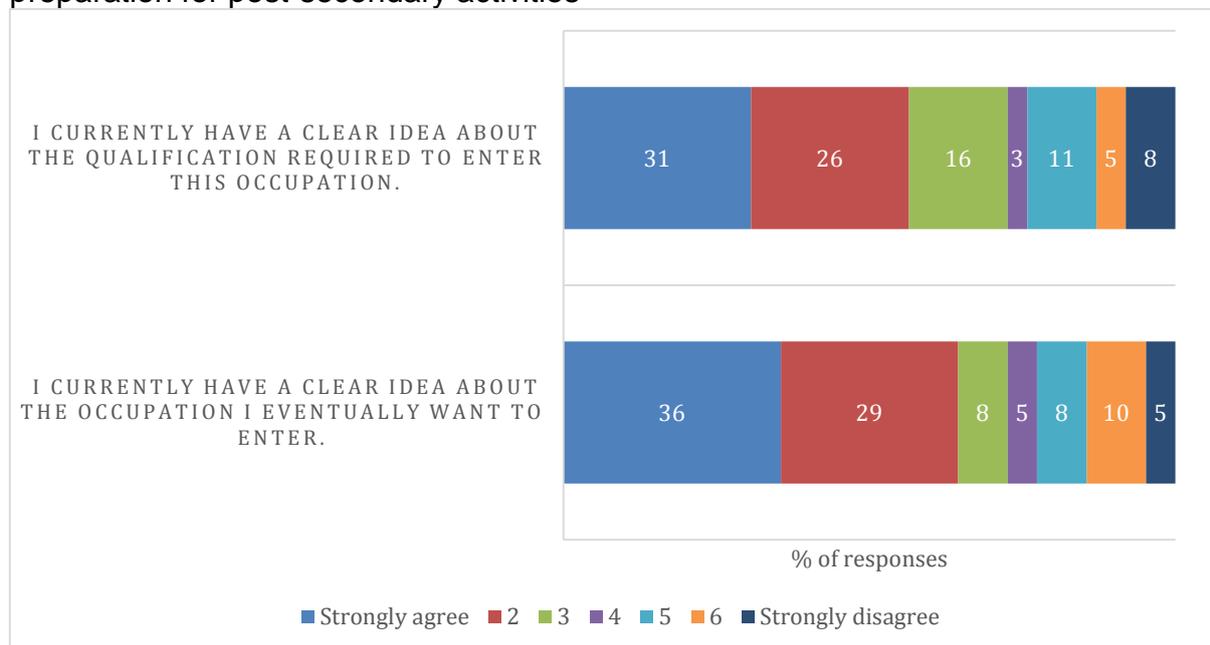
CP has made me grow academically as well as professionally. I am able to excel in my academics and in the future I will be able to excel in my profession. (Ellie)

The following student thought his first year was successful but not because of the CP.

No, I learned everything from failure during my first year. I made a 2.2 GPA¹³ (4.0 scale) in my first semester, but came back with a 3.9 GPA (4.0 scale) as a result of hard work. None of which, had to do with my experience in the CP. (Survey respondent)

As can be seen in Figure 3.7, most survey respondents indicated they had a clear idea about the occupations they eventually want to enter and the qualifications required to do so.

Figure 3.7: Clear career-related idea and requirements to enter occupation, preparation for post-secondary activities



¹³ Similarly to UCAS tariff points in the UK, the grade point average (GPA) are an indicator for students' achievement in secondary school and are an important factor when applying to US universities.

Compared to a UK-wide study of first year undergraduate students (Purcell et al., 2009, p. 103) in which similar questions were asked, CP students were more definite about the occupations they eventually want to enter and the qualifications needed (16 and 17 percent of UK students gave strong agreement ratings for the above questions compared to 31 and 36 percent of CP students). Examples given by CP students of their desired future occupations included:

Commercial pilot. (Survey respondent)

Either become an Entrepreneur or an Accountant. (Survey respondent)

I am going to be a mechanical engineer and work in industry. (Survey respondent)

I am planning on going to University and afterward get a career in Geospatial Intelligence. (Survey respondent)

I will be transferring to the University . . . to study Computer Science, focusing in Artificial Intelligence Development. I will also be enlisting in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, where, after my graduation, I will receive my commission as a Naval officer and pursue my career of being a Navy SEAL. (Survey respondent)

My future plans are to finish my undergraduate degree, then obtain my masters so I can be a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. (Survey respondent)

Fighter pilot with aerospace engineering bachelors. (Survey respondent)

It is important to bear in mind that most of these students had only just started their post-secondary studies or employment and that these plans need to be seen as part of their career-making decisions. Many previous studies identify how students change their minds once they have spent more time in their chosen pathways, or revise their career plans during their higher education studies (Purcell et al., 2009). In our student interviews, Amelie and Jonathan were rather unsure about their positions in five years' time, whilst most of the others, such as Anna, had concrete plans.

In five years' time I will be 23, I will have just finished my dual degree so I hope to be doing an internship with a company that I will eventually work for. So, my dream job would be – and I'm talking more about when I'm in my 40s – that would be a public relations director of ABC Family which is a strain of the World Disney Company Network, just because of what they stand for. And I would like to work for them. So ideally, an internship in the US, I'm actually looking into how to apply for it, even though it's a few years down the track, so hopefully I'll be doing that in 5 years' time. I think having the film background through the CP will be hopefully advantageous to that. (Anna)

André referred to the way he intended to build up or use existing networks to realize his occupational plans.

In a couple of years, I will be well into my web development course. . . . I also have a placement year and I can get some contacts and apply for work in companies. (André)

Ryan explained not only the way in which he intends to acquire career-related and occupational knowledge but also his artistic development.

I hope to be on the path to become an architect. But I do artwork as well, and I'd like to develop my own style in the meanwhile as an artist. (Ryan)

Other interviewees also elaborated on their specific occupational ideas.

I'd love to be a zoo keeper! (Victoria)

I should be flying S35s in five years! (Alfred)

Ideal job social media executive. . . . But I really enjoyed the job and I think I would love to do it, taking over the website, loading the videos, editing them, it's similar to advertising. (Nicole)

... either a stylist for a magazine or having my own boutique here in the US! (Jenny)

I want to be a pediatric nurse practitioner and I will then. . . . You know, just be successful in the workforce, and then, you know, get a house, and a family. (Ellie)

Survey respondents were also asked how the CP might contribute to their future pathways. More than half (53 percent) were optimistic that the CP would have positive implications for their futures; 11 percent said they did not know (yet); and 15 percent said that it would not have any implications for their future (based on 45 responses). The following quotes give a generally positive view of the CPs' contribution to their futures.

It has given me a wonderful head start towards the future I desire. (Anna)

It's another stepping stone in the right direction for my future. (Survey respondent)

To summarize, nearly three-quarters of CP students considered the time after their CP studies as successful, and most of this group (82 percent) said that this had to do with the CP. A large proportion of CP students in our study were aware of the occupations they wanted to enter, and most also knew about the qualifications required to enter the occupations. Lastly, more than half of all students were optimistic that the CP would have positive implications for their futures.

4. Employer and Admissions Officer Views

According to the IB's General regulations (General regulations: IB Career-related Certificate, 2014), the "IB Organization actively promotes wide recognition and acceptance of the CP as a basis for exit of secondary/high school education and/or entry to courses at universities and other institutions of higher or further education and apprenticeships, but the requirements of individual institutions and the relevant authorities of a country are beyond the IB Organization's control and are subject to change." Therefore, the CP's recognition for higher education entry or for apprenticeships is not guaranteed, due to the different national regulations and regulations within individual HEIs.

Further interviews were conducted in order to understand how admissions officers and international employers perceived the CP as an entrance qualification. In most countries discussed in the interviews, applications to higher education are processed independently by HEIs. Therefore, the information supplied in this chapter can only offer a general indication of how individual admissions officers and international employers see the CP. Additionally, it is noted that the views described in this section are drawn from a small group of interviewees (nine in total).

Interviews were conducted with:

- University of Warwick *UoW* (UK); Canterbury Christ Church University *CCU* (UK); Columbia College Chicago *Colom* (USA); Savannah College of Art and Design *SCAD* (USA); United States Air Force Academy *USAFA* (USA); Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne *Ecole* (Switzerland);
- An Employer (large conference hotel (Germany)); and
- Admissions providers: UCAS (UK); Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung (Germany); Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen (Germany).

It is important to bear in mind that due to the newness of the programme and the small number of applicants with a CP, only a few of these interviewees had had immediate experiences with CP students. Nevertheless, all HEIs and the employer were aware of the CP for a variety of reasons including:

- Contacts with the IB and IB country representatives;
- Visiting local schools and speaking to CP students;
- Offering internships to CP students; or
- Reviewing CP student applications.

All interviewees were able to identify advantages and disadvantages of the programme, as discussed in 4.1. At the current stage, only the US HEIs could confirm that they had already admitted applicants with a CP certificate to their courses. Universities from the UK were not sure if they had accepted applicants, and the German admissions provider said that students with a CP certificate were not entitled to study in public German HEIs. The overall admissions procedure to higher education in selected countries is described in 4.2, followed by a discussion of the CP as an entry qualification. Lastly, employer and admissions officer information needs are elaborated in section 4.3.

4.1 Advantages and disadvantages of the CP as perceived by employer and admissions officers

Participants in this component of the CP study were asked to share their thoughts regarding the advantages and disadvantages of students having completed the CP. Both the Columbia and CCU interviewees said they appreciated that CP students had already gained occupational experiences before embarking on higher education.

Students don't accidentally end up in such a program. In fact, they research it and then work hard to be successful in it. (Colum)

The qualification that they were taking had made them think about a range of possibilities . . . once they left school. I don't necessarily think other qualifications would have given them the same. (CCU)

The CP program gives secondary school students an opportunity to really dive into their interests early-on (much earlier than perhaps those that don't participate and make this decision [in] their first or second year of university). (SCAD)

This advantage is closely related to HEIs' expectations of the kind of students who do the CP. CP students were seen as special and unique.

I understand that some students look for ways to specialize as soon as they can, and this kind of student often does well in our focused programs of study. We think highly of this kind of applicant. (Colum)

The admissions officer from Canterbury Christ Church University also mentioned how a local CP school he visited included "non-traditional" students who were encouraged to consider entering higher education.

The school I visited has recruited a number of students who might not have thought about higher education to actively look at that as an option. . . . And the group that I saw were at least positive about potentially thinking about applying to university. The school thought that the qualification was enhancing the group rather than just doing a BTEC qualification on its own. (CCU)

As the following quotes illustrate, nearly all of the employer and admissions officers we interviewed offered positive remarks on how the CP combined both career-related studies and academic subjects.

To combine the IB with career-related subjects, this could be a very good combination. A good preparation for studies.... (Ecole)

The positive thing was that it was wrapped around a BTEC . . . and the additional units from the IB that they were using certainly seem to bring an added discipline to the students. (CCU)

Mirroring feedback given by CP alumni themselves, interviewees indicated they noticed that the combination between career-related and academic training in the CP seemed to have enhanced specific skills, such as teamworking, communication skills, language and cultural skills displayed by CP alumni. Moreover, students were also

seen as “Academically prepared” (USAFA) and as “Self-directed and focused” (Colum).

...from the group that I saw the IB had encouraged them to work together more to think as a group and as individuals. And there was a level of articulation that I saw. The students were an impressive group. (CCU)

Interns [CP students] are very cosmopolitan, come from many countries from all around the world. . . . Advantages are there language skills but also the cultural competencies. They know many cultures and the school prepares them for prospective employment in an international company. (Employer)

They are exposed to true industry expectations and demands. They are often very independent, motivated, passionate and mature. (SCAD)

Few interviewees expressed concerns about the newness of the programme and explained this was the case because the International Baccalaureate is an established brand, and the CP uses existing features such as the DP courses.

Because we have quite a good level of confidence in the higher level subjects then I don't think it is quite such a concern with this for me personally as I have with some other brand new qualifications. (UoW)

The University of Warwick admissions officer was generally positive about the CP; nonetheless, this interviewee noted that the specialisation has disadvantages for students who would like to study an academically oriented course.

The disadvantage is that almost everybody else applying will be applying with a higher level of academic qualifications. . . . it is just not as broad an academic qualification (Uow)

Additionally, the UoW interviewee was sceptical about the general awareness of the CP among admissions officers and also with the changed name from IBCC to CP.

The only other thing is that people would not be aware of what it was and potentially would be initially confused by it. Because of the structure we have got here that would not impact on the probability of being rejected. Other institutions, it goes directly to the course director, and if they don't know much about it, I could see them dismissing it early on. But that can't happen here. But also, because it has changed its name, as well, if somebody was aware of it a while back they might not necessarily think it is the same. (UoW)

In summary, interviewees saw advantages in the kind of students who would study for a CP certificate. They expected them to have made an early decision about their careers and to be focussed on their studies. The combination of academic and career-related training was also seen as providing students with particular useful skills. The specialisation of CP students, however, was also seen as a possible disadvantage, as students may not be able to compete with students holding broader skills for particular courses. Additionally, the lack of knowledge amongst admissions officers was noted as a potential disadvantage for students.

4.2 The CP as an entry qualification in selected countries

Although admissions procedures vary in each country, and this report cannot cover all global admissions procedures, the following table offers an overview of the admissions procedures for the USA, the UK, Germany and Finland as these were the countries from which the majority of CP students in our study had come.

Table 4.1: Overview of the admission procedures to higher education in selected countries

	USA <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students fill in HEI's application form. Students can apply for as many courses as they want, but there is a fee involved.• Students get accepted based on their GPA (grade point average), extracurricular activities, teacher recommendations and the standardized tests scores (ACT or SAT).
	UK <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students complete a UCAS application form and select up to five course choices.• The application is then distributed to the institutions that will make a decision and give out offers.
	Finland <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applicants to undergraduate courses apply via a joint application system Studyinfo.fi. Students can apply to up six study programmes.• It is common practice in Finnish higher education to have entrance examinations.
	Germany <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For medical courses and courses with admission restriction, applicants apply via the Stiftung für Hochschulzulassung platform at the University.• Applicants to non-restricted courses apply to the university directly.

Source: Interviews with Admissions Providers, UCAS website, studyinfo.fi

In Germany, the CP is not accepted as entry qualification to public HEIs, according to the Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen. However, the SRH Hochschule Berlin, a private university, accepted the CP for specific courses. Both British HEI interviewees were not sure if they had had applications from CP students, but both said that they would accept them in certain circumstances. USAFA, SCAD and Columbia have already accepted applicants with CP certificates, with Columbia explaining they were very receptive to CP students.

...so it's not especially surprising that we did not deny any of these. In fall 2014's class, we admitted about 85% of our applicants. (Colum)

Interviewees said they would offer places in selected courses on the basis of the DP subjects completed by CP students, the students' careers-related programmes, connections between DP subjects and the university programme, and other skills held by students. In the main, it was perceived the courses that CP students would be allowed to enrol in would be more career-related, rather than academic, taking their Career-related Studies into account.

It would tend to be for things like computer science, engineering, more applied courses. We think it is going to work for vocationally qualified graduates; it has done in the past with qualifications that are similar to this. It is not going to be the course that is highly competitive, with people coming in with sort of traditional qualifications, necessarily, that they are not as closely linked, such as economics. Business courses might be tricky, because our business school looks for a particular mix of courses, so it wants an essay writing subject and maths, as well. So that might be a little bit more complicated but it would not be impossible. (UoW)

Additionally, admissions officers also said that specific requirements are often made for courses, such as a student's CP subject choices. Popular subjects required by admissions officers were English, maths, sciences or languages.

We do require, however, that at least one of the subjects is a quantitative subject. As part of the IB subjects. So like, mathematics, other STEM subjects, we also accept Business and Management. (Ecole)

Additional weight is given for . . . IB . . . courses in Maths, Sciences, History, and Foreign Languages. (USAFA)

The admissions officer interviewees indicated they also took into account if students had studied at higher or at standard level. For example, most HEIs insisted on higher-level courses but would take standard-level courses with very good grades into account.

We prefer the higher level otherwise the standard level with very good grades, they would need to work a little bit harder for us. (Ecole)

We are looking for higher levels, so, it would just depend on the two subjects they studied. . . . standard level probably would not be high enough for us given they are doing the two as it stands. (UoW)

Two admissions officers noted that they were prepared to accept standard-level subjects but would question students on why they did not take higher-level ones if such courses had been available.

We recommend they take higher level courses if their school has them available. (USAFA)

We would question why they have chosen to do standard if they had had the option to do two highers. We'll just have to find more out about what they were thinking in their subject choices. It might be that it was not available at the place they were doing it so that gives a little bit more leeway for us. (UoW)

In the following quote, the admissions officer of the University of Warwick explains the rationale behind this decision.

We try and make sure that all offers are the same across all different qualifications. It is never perfect because they don't naturally match. But we

don't knowingly give an advantage to a particular group if we can avoid it and maybe going down standard level would do that. (UoW)

Two interviewees also indicated that consideration would be given to the relevance of students' Career-related Studies and the courses they were seeking to enrol in.

[If somebody did a CP with a careers-related project in engineering and higher level maths and physics] that would be exactly the sort of person we would strongly consider for engineering. That would be fine. . . . I am presuming that a lot of them have an interest in a particular area, so I expect their higher levels will be quite similar. Languages would be potentially another one, when they would do the higher level languages . . . , we might consider that as well. It would just depend if they have the language at the right level to be able to study it at university. It might well be that we can do that for languages, also if they choose those. . . . Potentially, for something like a language, they have done a higher level in French and a lower level in German, they potentially maybe could study French. (UoW)

And the career-related area would have to be in hospitality. (Ecole)

As we described in earlier sections of this report, some students, especially in the UK, complained about the way in which the CP is recognised as an entry qualification for higher education. According to UCAS website¹⁴, currently the CP accrues tariff points depending on the level of study (higher/standard level) and the grades obtained. The Reflective Project also attracts tariff points (depending on the grades), as does the BTEC, as an example for the Career-related Study. Our HEI interviewees were aware of the fact that non-traditional qualifications did not fit into the usual admissions process but also explained they had procedures to take this into account. For example, the USAFA interviewee said that because non-academic courses are not calculated in a student's GPA,

Admissions will evaluate their transcript and recalculate their GPA. The recalculated GPA and ACT/SAT scores will be combined for an overall academic composite. (USAFA)

Meanwhile, the UoW admissions officer explained that in admissions they do not use tariff points as information about individual students' achievements.

We are not interested in tariff points. In admissions, no. The university is interested, because tariff points lead into the league tables. We don't use them in the office, we never have done. It has always been on a grade base. . . . But obviously there are a lot of qualifications that are not on the tariff, all of the EU qualifications, up to now, have not been. (UoW)

And the Canterbury Christ Church University admissions officer added,

We get lots of applications from people who are not in the tariff, for example people who have got level 3 NVQ. With the CP it would be a grade based offer. .

¹⁴ <https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/entry-requirements/tariff/tariff-tables/1116> (accessed 05-08-2015)

. . bits of the IB have got tariff points, anyway. . . . Whilst to us, it does not make any difference to us. Tariff points are a short hand requirement describing what your entry requirements are. (CCU)

Both these UK admissions officers were aware of the relevance of tariff points to British young people.

Tariff points become like a currency, if you've not got tariff points and you are a 17-18 year old, it makes you feel different. (CCU)

We want to make sure that CP graduates are aware that we encourage them to apply and that their applications will seriously be considered. So, they know that that they've got a chance to apply. Because I think a lot of people self-select, and just not apply, and that would be a shame because if it is the right sort of subject area, then I think this would prepare them well. (UoW)

Finally, both UK HEI interviewees remarked on the CP being a new programme with no student outcome data, and as such, they said they would need to gain more experience in assessing these students' long-term outcomes.

To summarize, only some of the interviewees in our study had received applications from CP students. However, all stated that they would accept them under specific circumstances, depending mainly on the courses they want to study, their completed DP subjects, whether they had studied these subjects on higher or standard level, and other skills they might have acquired. In some cases, specific procedures were taken for applicants with a less common secondary-school qualification such as a CP certificate.

4.3 Employer and admissions officer needs for information and their anticipation of future development

In general, all the employer and admissions officer interviewees felt well informed about the CP. Nevertheless, some points were identified where there was a further need for information. For example, one interviewee wanted to receive more information on the following.

Differentiation and likely progression of both the CP and the IB DP core would be of interest, for example the role of the extended essay and the Reflective Project. Particularly, when you consider the CP is taken alongside standard BTEC programmes (UCAS)

Additionally, Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne (Switzerland), specifically, said that they needed more information about the CP schools offering hospitality as a Career-related Study, such as a programme description and a curriculum. Furthermore, although the USAFA felt informed to some extent about the CP, they reported that they would like to know the programme's emphasis concerning the ACT/SAT tests that applicants must take.

5. Case Studies

The following case studies of students' CP experiences were selected to broadly represent all IBO regions. During the period of our research, most of the students had studied at state schools as most of the schools offering the CP were state funded¹⁵. The case studies cover students who went straight into higher education (Frances, Anna, Ellie, Andrea) but also include students on a gap year (Mark) and in career-related training (Victoria). The case studies show how students' choices during their CP studies made an impact on their current activities and how some students had constructed their early careers after leaving secondary school.

5.1 Frances

Frances became a confident English speaker as a child. He studied for his CP certificate at a private school in the IB Africa, Europe, Middle East region (IB AEM). He studied two subjects: "Business and Management (SL)" and "Language B (SL)," which he passed with 4 and 6 respectively. The focus of his Career-related Study was in management, a school's own Career-related Study course. In terms of the flexibility of the CP, the Reflective Project and his "Business and Management (SL)," Frances rated these as "fair." However, he was more content with his "Language B (SL)" subject, which he rated as "good." With hindsight, he would probably undertake the CP again. He said the best part of the CP had been the internships.

In internships, you learned what you really wanted to do. All the others [the DP students], all they could think about was Uni whilst we learned to be independent.

After the CP, he enrolled in a course of sports management in a different country (England), which allowed him to combine his hobby with his studies.

I was always very sporty, and in my class, there were many sporty students. We also had sports at school. And I had a lot of management classes. . . . And management is too dry a subject, I don't want that, and then I saw that they offered sports management in [HEI], and I applied and was accepted.

At the time of the interview he was unclear about his future occupation but considered the time after his CP as successful. The CP had

... helped me to decide on what I should focus on for my further studies.

With regard to the future, he said,

it depended on how uni went.

5.2 Anna

Anna took her CP at a school in the Asia-Pacific region (IB AP). She passed four Diploma courses: "Language A: Language and Literature (HL)" with a 5, "Business and Management (SL)" with a 6, "Language ab initio" with a 5 and "Film (HL)" with a 5. Her Career-related Study was in film, organised by a HEI. With hindsight, she would undertake the CP again but not within her school. She mainly complained

¹⁵ According to the IBO website, currently (October 2015) 77 schools offer the CP of which seven are private schools.

about organisational problems at the school, such as timetabling. Nevertheless, she stated,

I think I was very lucky that the CP ended up working for me and that it came at the right time.

When asked how she would improve the CP, she mentioned that she did not undertake any internships and did not learn about application skills.

But we didn't do any learning how to apply for jobs, write resumes, even just applying for things in general, like applying for university or different government things - those definitely would have been very helpful. Because in all of that you are left to your own devices!

At the time of the interview, Anna studied business/creative industries for a dual bachelor's degree at the same university where she took the Career-related Study component of her CP. She felt she was coping very well in her studies. Nearly all aspects of the CP were helpful for her, except the "Language ab initio" course.

The impact of the CP she described as follows.

Wonderful introduction and step in the right direction. . . . It has given me a wonderful head start towards the future I desire.

5.3 Victoria

Victoria studied for a CP at a state school in the UK (IB AEM region). She chose "Psychology (SL)," which she passed with a 4. and "Visual Arts (SL)," where she gained a 6. She was not very clear about her CP careers courses but said they were in the field of art. She elaborated how she had to choose from a large selection of subjects and BTEC courses.

There was a lot of courses you could choose to do: . . . we had different sections and you could pick 2 BTEC from one section and for the rest, you also had pick 2 A-levels. BTEC choice: We had music, art, business, health and social, childcare, and there was one more, I think applied science.

She would definitely do the CP again, given the choice. However, she struggled with the Reflective Project. In one of her survey responses, she wrote,

I would suggest more guidance on the Reflective Project as I struggled with mine due to me not knowing what the guidelines and restrictions were.

In her qualitative interview, she elaborated in greater detail.

I struggled to find a topic. So I chose to do it in music and I did it on music stereotypes. . . . I tried to figure it out myself. They told me to ask my tutor, so I asked my music teacher but he said he didn't know much about it. . . . I didn't get much guidance at all and I struggled.

She would recommend the CP for people who

didn't want to going to university straight away.

After her CP, she went to a college to undertake a BTEC Level 3 course in “Animal Management.” However, she felt she would leave this course if she were offered an apprenticeship at a zoo. During her CP, she undertook work experience at a zoo where she formed her career ideas. She also used the experience for networking.

They told me to get in touch with the curators. I've done that, sent in my CV. They said there is not an opening at the minute, but they got my details on their computers, so the sooner something comes up....

She considered the time after the CP to be successful.

It helped me to gain more confidence in my studies and has improved my skills to take on new challenges knowing I can do things if I have the right mind-set.

5.4 Ellie

Ellie completed her CP at a US state school (IBA region). Before the CP, she had not undertaken any career-related studies. She took two diploma subjects: “Mathematical Studies (SL),” which she passed with a 4. and “HL Biology,” which she passed with a 5. Her Career-related Study was in healthcare. She would definitely choose the CP again, with hindsight.

She elaborated on the content of her Careers-related study and how this provided a range of knowledge, skills and competencies.

We worked in the lab, and we studied things like nutrition, basically is you learn about proteins, amino acids, essential vitamins, etc., we constantly had quizzes and tests on them. For example, I don't want to brag but in the nutrition class, only two people passed the test, a boy and me, we were the only two that passed it, it was very very hard! In my regular nursing class we talked about mainly taking care for the elderly, how to address the patients, we had tests every week. In our lab class, we performed blood pressure, temperature etc. tests on simulated mannequins and in order to pass this class we were examined on a combination of several random skills - like dressing or bathing the patient, changing the sheets, and we had to pass both sections in order to get our [nursing certificate]. We got a really good practical education as well as academic.

After the CP, she studied nursing for a Bachelors degree at a US HEI. She felt that she was coping very well and that her CP had been “very helpful” in preparing her for her current course.

CP has made me grow academically as well as professionally. I am able to excel in my academics and in the future I will be able to excel in my profession. My future plans are to finish my undergraduate degree, then obtain my masters so I can be a Paediatric Nurse Practitioner.

[The CP] will contribute to my pathway by making it easier to know what to do in the work force.

She also discussed the extracurricular activities that she enjoyed at her HEI, and how she still wanted to be involved with community service.

I'm enjoying college, I'm also very involved on campus, that's another big thing! I am in six organisations: the SGA, Student Government Association, student African American society, diversity education, and some others! . . . we volunteer in the community, we learn about issues in the local communities, we go around and help residents, I've just applied to that yesterday but I haven't heard whether they accept me yet!

She considered the time after her CP as successful, and she said that the CP had contributed to this success because

...it made [me] grow and realize I have great potential.

5.5 Andrea

Andrea studied for a CP at a state school in the USA (IBA region). She took two Diploma courses: “Physics (SL)” and “Mathematics (HL).” For her “Physics” course, she achieved a 3, and for her “Mathematics” course, she scored a 2. As a result, she did not receive the CP qualification. She felt, however, she could have passed if she had been advised better about her choice of subjects. Andrea was clear about her career-related path from a very early age.

I had taken EDD [a Project Lead the Way course] before I knew the CP was an option for me. Prior to that I had known I would like to be on the Pre IB/AP track so I had already signed up for honours classes.

Her father worked as a teacher on the Project Lead the Way course and influenced her to take part in the engineering courses. She quickly became very excited about the opportunities she was given.

I took one engineering course and I loved it, so I took the next one, I had lots of fun and I got good grades. . . . I found it easy. So I did the senior design course, the EDD [Engineering Development and Design] and got to work with neurosurgeons, and we worked on a project about hydrocephalus...that was really cool! I joined the robotics team in my junior year. I did physics that year for IB and I did math the next year, that's when I decided to focus on math, science, robotics and engineering.

For her choice of careers study, she selected an engineering course that would provide her with the most transferable skills.

So, I started looking into aeronautic engineering, bio- and mechanical engineering. I chose mechanical because it's the most broad, until I decide what I want to focus on

With hindsight, she would probably undertake the programme again. Nevertheless, she thought that the CP could be improved, mainly with regards to the communication between the Careers-related study and Diploma subject teachers.

... make sure that the teachers know how to teach a higher level course and that there are things available for the students to get the help they need to pass the course. . . . Teachers on both ends need to realize however that this is a large work load to handle in high school and some students get burnt out so keep that in mind when scheduling all the exams on one day

She studied for a Bachelors degree in Mechanical Engineering at a US university at the time of the interview.

I want to be a human center design engineer.. college is just what you do to get there.

For her current course, she believes that the Diploma subjects and the Careers-related Study were very helpful. Moreover, she felt that the CP would contribute to her pathway to future study or work.

Many skills I have learned being in this program such as seeking out study groups and learning to budget time I have taken to college with me. . . . It has given me an in depth look at what an engineering career is. Especially after taking EDD [a Project Lead The Way course] I am confident in my engineering skills and abilities. I have been through a tough course before so I have developed the thought process to help get through yet another tough academic program. Makes the transition from high school to college much smaller.

Indeed, despite not receiving a CP pass, she thought that the CP had helped her to get admitted to higher education.

And I think it did help for college, even though I did not get the certificate. I think they looked at my courses and thought, oh, she did physics, and calculus, in high school I did try to go the extra mile. I know for sure that they looked at my design project so I think it was worth it. It was hard. But it was good to go through that.

5.6 Mark

Mark undertook his CP at a US state school. Before he embarked on the CP, Mark took CTE (Career and Technical Education) courses from middle school to high school. He studied two Diploma subjects, "History (HL)" and "Biology (SL)," and for both subjects, he was awarded a 4. He studied culinary arts as part of the school's own Career-related Study course. During his CP, he undertook an internship in retail and in childcare. Mark specifically noted that he was not very satisfied with the information that was given to him by the school's career service because they

only offered information about University and not as much information on other post-graduate information.

Mark said he would definitely do the CP again but suggested that the brand awareness of the qualification could be improved.

I think the biggest improvement is making sure that schools and major jobs know about the CP and how it is rigorous and different.

After the CP, he did a gap year and worked in a school where he taught sixth graders,

...teaching them skills like math, literacy, behaviour and attendance. I love it!

He felt well prepared for college and for his gap year. He said that the CP had taught him a lot about professionalism, and he acquired a strong work ethic.

We had a heavy workload, and I wouldn't have taken some of the IB classes, had I not done the CP. I knew I was already challenging myself, so I just decided to challenge myself a bit more by doing it.

Mark described how he also felt that he has become independent during his gap year.

I've learned more about life and living as an adult in general through [gap year] than in the four years of high school. It has really! I think CP prepared me well for college and [gap] year. . . . What I am doing now at [gap year] prepared me for college. I wake up at five in the morning and I don't come home until about six and just that discipline of waking up on time has prepared me for school and going to classes early in the morning. It's done more to prepare me than the high school has in the past four years.

Finally, Mark said that he already applied to colleges and was accepted. He wanted to study geospatial intelligence as he took a course in high school at the local community college and loved it.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In general, most CP alumni who took part in our study were content with the education they received with the International Baccalaureate Career-related Programme. A high proportion of these CP students said that, with hindsight, they would do the CP again. Also, a majority of students considered the time after graduation with their CP certificates to be successful, and for most, the CP was a contributing factor in their success. More than half of all students had entered higher education after their CPs. A small group (8 percent) were employed according to their career plans, and 3 were in career-related training or apprenticeships.

Despite students' positive evaluation of the CP and its impact on their activities after the programme, there were some areas which students said could be improved. These areas cover the recruitment of students into the CP, careers clarity and the transferability of skills acquired, the reputation of the CP, the selection of subjects and Career-related Study to optimise skill gain, and communication and activities after the CP. Finally, we outline implications and suggestions for further research.

Recruitment of students into the CP

Just under half of the students in our study were directly recruited by teachers into the CP, which reflects the newness of the programme. For example, potential students could not use previous students' experiences to inform themselves about the possibilities of the CP. Subsequently, it seemed that only a small proportion of students registered for a CP without having been encouraged by a teacher to do so in some way.

We suggest that teachers need to be fully informed of the programme and its potential outcomes in order to provide comprehensive advice to students and parents when initially recommending the CP, and to provide information throughout the programme. Students could also benefit from the experiences and advice of previous CP students in making their decisions.

Different pathways depending on students' careers clarity and their choices

From the survey and student interviewees, it could be seen that teachers selected students who held clear occupational ideas or students they thought were more practically orientated and not well suited to the IB Diploma Programme.

Our research shows that the CP was suitable for both kinds of students. On one hand, those with clear occupational ideas were able to follow their occupational paths and specialise early in their chosen career-related training. Students who were more practically orientated and not well suited to IB Diploma Programme, on the other hand, were able to test career-related ideas and, after the CP, either continue on their career paths or discard them.

However, the transferability of skills acquired during the CP depended on whether young people changed their career ideas during or after the CP and if the acquired skills were transferable to their post-secondary activities. In general, four different pathways can be differentiated, depending on students' careers clarity, Diploma subjects and Career-related Studies, and expected outcomes:

- (1) Before entering the CP, students had a clear idea about their occupational pathways and chose a Careers-related study and Diploma subjects accordingly. During the CP, students gained specialised skills, knowledge and competencies. In general, they were well prepared for higher education or career-related training in their chosen career paths. However, it can be problematic, as seen with Andrea (see case study 5.5), if students chose their subjects solely according to interests rather than according to the grades they can expect. For strategic purposes, it is sometimes better to choose a subject in which better grades can be expected. However, in most cases there is a close connection between interests in subjects and the grades students receive.
- (2) Before entering the CP, students did not have a clear idea about their occupational pathways and chose their Careers-related Studies and Diploma subjects according to general interest, peers' choices and/ or the schools' offer. If students pursued the occupational paths after the CP, they were, similarly to the first case, well prepared for higher education and/or career-related training.
- (3) Like (2), students who took a third pathway did not have a clear idea about their occupational pathways before entering the CP and chose their Careers-related Studies and Diploma subjects according to peers' choices and/ or the schools' offerings. After their CPs, however, students gained experience in one occupational area but did not want to pursue this occupational pathway and chose a different (but related) occupational pathway. Depending on the similarity between the students' Careers-related Studies and the new pathways chosen, students were still well prepared for higher education and/or career-related training. This pathway is illustrated in Mark's example (see case study 5.6). Mark managed to transfer the work ethic that he gained during the CP from his Career-related Study in culinary arts to his gap year where he taught school children.
- (4) Finally, some students either did not have a clear career idea before entering the CP and/or changed their occupational ideas substantially. In these cases, they might have missed out on important transferable skills or gained specialised skills they were unable to use in their new chosen occupations. In these cases, unfortunately, students were not prepared for higher education and/or career-related training in their new career paths.

The flexibility of the CP provides a different kind of education to suit different kinds of students. It can be a challenging qualification in which high-class academic and career-related training is combined for very ambitious students, or it can be an education for students not eligible or capable to undertake the IB DP, or it can cater to students who want to experience an occupation without committing themselves.

As was illustrated in our student interviewees and case studies, the CP seemed best suited for students (e.g., Anna, see case study 5.2) who were very clear about their occupational ideas and the qualifications required to achieve their occupational goals. Many other students were similar in their careers clarity and chose the CP to

get an early start on their occupational pathways. For these students, the CP was an ideal preparation for higher education and/or career-related training.

However, other students chose the CP to gain some understanding about the occupational pathways they might want to enter. In most of these cases, students were able to transfer the skills and knowledge they had gained to other occupational pathways.

Early specialisation became risky if students missed out on transferable skills necessary to follow other occupational pathways. The early specialisation of students on selected subjects, however, is not unusual and also occurs in other secondary school degrees. Nevertheless, it is imperative that students (and their parents) are aware of this risk.

Reputation of the CP

Research findings were ambivalent with regard to the reputation of the CP. Whilst the survey suggested most students were to some extent satisfied with the CP's reputation, some students provided feedback about the low reputation of the CP at their schools. Students said that they were seen to be taking the easy option and were regarded as academically less capable, compared to IB DP students. This view, in which career-related education is marginalized and seen as less desirable than academic pathways, however, is not exclusive to IB schools. Whilst career-related training is gaining recognition as a viable and respectable option for specific students (DeFeo, 2015), in many countries, it is not as recognised as solely academic pathways. Students reported that both IB DP students and teachers displayed this attitude. As a result, students felt demotivated in these few schools. In one school, it also resulted in the "othering" of students i.e., students saw themselves as different compared to others. In Frances' and James' school, the otherness of CP students had a positive side effect and resulted in students' solidarity and thus teamworking skills.

The maintenance of the reputation of the CP as world-class education in which academic and career-related skills and knowledge are taught is important for its acceptance as a higher education entry qualification. In this context, it is vital that the CP is seen as similarly challenging as the IB DP, albeit with a career-related element. One way to retain the high reputation of the programme refers to the language used. Many qualitative and survey respondents referred to the IB DP as *the IB* or *the full IB*, suggesting that their qualification was at a subordinate level. It needs to be understood that both the IB DP *and* the CP are IB programs, offering everything that the IB brand stands for. The CP needs to be branded as a challenging opportunity for academically able students from different backgrounds who want to combine academic and career-related training.

The selection of subjects and Career-related Study to optimise skill gain

The CP was flexible enough to cater to different kinds of students with different careers clarity and academic capabilities. Students chose their Diploma subjects mainly according to their interests or to enhance their Career-related Studies. Most students chose two Diploma subjects, and two-thirds of the subjects chosen were at standard level.

In most cases, students with a clear career-related idea managed to specialise early in their chosen careers and thus should be able to gain occupation-specific skills. On the other hand, students without a clear idea should be able to concentrate on transferable skills.

Several HEI admissions officers stressed that students required at least two DP subjects studied at higher level. However, a number of students reported that teachers had suggested they take subjects at standard level, as these were seen as more appropriate for the student. Some students indicated they had not been aware of the different classification of subjects and subject level required for university admission. As a result, they were frustrated and felt cheated after the CP. It is thus important that (potential) students are aware of the acceptability of the CP for admission to higher education. If they study subjects on a level that will not be sufficient for them to enter higher education they should be informed about this before entering the CP.

Communication

Some students complained about the lack of information they received before embarking on the CP. Areas in which they did not feel informed referred mainly to the organisation of the CP at the school, the assessment of their achievements, and the use of the CP for higher education applications. Consequently, some study participants did not think that they had made an informed choice when embarking on the CP. It seems that there is a need to increase the level of communication between schools and (potential) students; and between the IB, schools and HEIs. Many of the following points of recommendation may already be in place in schools; however, this list can provide an internal checklist.

Communication between schools, students and HEIs

- Students need to know about the way in which specific subjects within the CP are taught, especially if the school has introduced new ways of teaching such as online teaching. Students need to be aware of their roles as active learners.
- Students need to know the conditions to be awarded a CP certificate. They need to understand the amount of DP subjects they are expected to take and the grades they need to pass the course.
- Students need to know how the final score of the qualification is calculated. In particular, if students study subjects at standard level, they need to understand that some HEIs do not accept these.
- Students need to be aware about the way in which they will be able to use the CP certificate for future applications to higher education or employment. The findings show that some students feel that teachers had held back information about the way in which their final scores were calculated.
- In some schools, students were provided with an information sheet or a pamphlet about the CP that they could add to their applications to higher education. Students reported that they appreciated this and that it allowed them to communicate their achievements during the CP to higher education admissions officers.
- Many schools informed local HEIs about the CP. However, students should be made aware of HEIs entry conditions for selected courses that might be suitable for CP students.

Activities after the CP

After the CP, more than half of all respondents had entered higher education and a small number (8 percent) reported that they were in employment related to their skill paths. Only three CP students were engaged in apprenticeships or career-related training.

School-to-work transition and thus youth labour market integration varies a great deal across the different countries (see for example Kerckhoff and Dylan, 1999, Shavit and Muller, 1998, OECD, 2014). Whilst in some countries, such as the USA and the UK, a high proportion of young people traditionally attend higher education, other countries use different transitions into employment. In countries such as Germany, Australia or Finland, where career-related training is a common and accepted alternative pathway into employment, CP students should be encouraged to enter apprenticeships after their CPs.

Further need for research

The findings presented in this report refer to students who left their secondary schools with a CP certificate in 2014 and covered their activities in the first year after their graduation. The research was conducted whilst the CP was still in the initial stages in many schools. Many problems, as discussed in this report, could be explained as a result of the early implementation of the qualification. In future years, the experiences and outcomes of CP students should be re-evaluated to understand whether these specific problems have ameliorated.

The presented findings were restricted to the first year of students after graduation with the CP certificate. However, many young people use the year immediately after leaving secondary school as a “gap year” in which they assess their future plans. Others were still engaged in compulsory army training and had only just started to apply for career-related training, employment or higher education. Other students had just taken the exam in November 2014, and thus the research only covered less than a year after they had left school. Therefore, it makes sense that future research covers a longer period of time after graduation.

It is recommended that this research exercise be repeated at a later stage. For a repeated research project, it would be advisable to

- Encourage students to agree to participate in the research whilst they are still at school. The response rate of students was much lower (4.7 percent) if they were invited from their former schools compared to their response rate if they were invited directly (30.4 percent).
- Cover a longer period of time to avoid “gap years,” compulsory army training and late school exams. It would be advisable to cover two to three years after students had graduated with a CP certificate.
- Include more than one cohort of students to boost the sample.

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