

FAQs on the Introduction of the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* – GOST (upper secondary level in Years 11 to 13)

What courses will there be?

A solid offer of a general *Abitur* (high school entrance diploma) with everything that is important to have a good basis for all imaginable courses of study. We will determine the future range of courses via a survey of our students in Years 6 to 9 and their parents in the 1st half of the 22/23 school year by the end of 2022 and inform you of the results by January 2023 at the latest. We will map our two focal points of languages and STEM in this. Due to the rather small size of our school, we do not expect to offer any rather unusual specialisation courses, such as Chinese or Latin.

Do you also offer computer science in Years 11 to 13?

It would certainly fit in very well with our STEM focus. We would like to wait and see what the survey of students and parents reveals and whether they want it.

Will there still be a STEM focus in Years 11 to 13?

Yes, we stand for our STEM focus in all grades of our school and will also represent it.

If so, which subjects are likely to be offered?

This will be determined by the survey in Years 6 to 9 by the end of 2022.

What will the course size be? How many students study per course?

The basic courses, e.g. in mathematics, German, English and Spanish, will take place in natural class sizes of approx. 10 to a maximum of 24 students, while advanced courses will take place in smaller groups of at least 5 to 8 students. For courses that are important because of our focus, we will also run them if not so many students sign up for them. We are still in the process of developing this, but it is very important to us to map our two focal points of languages and STEM in the course program.

Will there be an international degree?

Yes, we are currently evaluating that. As things stand at the moment, it is very likely that we will offer the British IGCSE at Year 10 and A-Levels at Year 13 will be offered. The IB programme does not coincide with the German *Abitur* and the Berlin Curriculum, so our students would have to decide whether to take IB or *Abitur*. We don't think that makes sense. We will decide and communicate this in the course of the school year 2022/23.

Where are the premises for the upper secondary school?

On the one hand, we have the new 'Second House' with more rooms for Years 7 to 10. On the other hand, as of 1.8.2024, further suitable rooms will be developed in the Platanus Bildungs gGmbH and lara.berlin support network in the immediate vicinity, and external options in district building projects will also be examined. We have been working hard on this since this school year and will inform you as

soon as decisions have been made. This is very likely going to happen in the course of the next school year. It is the most important issue at the moment, as time is of the essence.

Will there be an Upper School coordinator?

We have yet to finalise the leadership structure. However, it is very likely that there will be another head of school for the *gymnasiale Oberstufe (GOST)* with the duties of a coordinator. This fits best into our leadership structure with a flat hierarchy and close contact between the head of school and all children and parents.

What are the differences between *Integrierte Sekundarschule* (integrated secondary school)/*Gemeinschaftsschule* and *Gymnasium* (high school or grammar school)?

The *Abitur* takes place in 3 school years instead of 2. Year 11 is the so-called orientation phase, in which many courses still take place in class and the basic and advanced courses can be learned and changed again for Year 12. From Year 12 onwards, every exam and every other assessment counts directly towards the total number of points for the *Abitur*. In the *Gymnasium*, this is the case directly from Year 11. The *Abitur* at the Integrated Secondary School is otherwise exactly the same as at the *Gymnasium*, with the same central tasks, the same assessment scheme, the same value for admission to a course of study.

How is the transition from Sek I to Sek II organised and when does the course introduction phase begin?

At the integrated secondary school/*Gemeinschaftsschule*, this is the so-called orientation phase in Year 11. At the *Gymnasium*, this takes place in the 10th grade, usually in the second half of the year, at the same time as the MSA examination phase.

Will there be final exams in both languages or only in German?

The respective final examination is always conducted in the language in which the subject was also taught in the GOST.

How does GOST go bilingual?

As a bilingual school, we will also offer subjects in English and subjects in German in the Upper Secondary School (GOST), depending on the working language of the teachers and as you know it from Years 1 to 10.

If lessons are taught in English, will the *Abitur* examinations also be offered in English?

Yes, in fact they have to be.

Can all students automatically continue in Year 11 after Year 10?

No, only those students who pass the MSA (intermediate school leaving certificate) and who receive a recommendation from us for the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe (GOST)*, i.e. who can be expected to pass the *Abitur* if their performance remains the same, can continue in the GOST. This assessment takes place (even now) with the end-of-year report of Year 9 and the half-year report of Year 10, so that all students and families can prepare for this. The same applies to external students who may join us in Year 11, except that they still have to fulfil the language requirements in German and English in order to be able to choose the respective course combinations in our bilingual course programme.

Which 3rd foreign language will you offer?

This will most likely be French from Year 10 or 11.

Will there also be Latin? No.

What course trips are planned?

This is not yet clear, it depends on the courses offered and all first years will be involved in the design here.

Is there a partner school abroad and if so, are there student exchange trips?

Yes, we have a partner school near Madrid, which the students of our school visit in Year 9. Whether there are exchange programmes for the GOST, and if so, which ones, is not yet planned.

Are there cooperations with other schools, universities, science & business in Berlin or Brandenburg?

Of course there will be as a very natural, necessary and sensible extension of our Work & Travel programme into Years 11 to 13.

Will there be an *Ganztag* offer for the students in Years 11 to 13?

We will work out a concept and an offer and test it with our first years to see to what extent this is desired and depending on how it is accepted.

How will we be able to attract and retain German-speaking teachers with 2nd state exams for the GOST?

By paying the same salaries as at public schools, which we will implement from Aug. 1, 2022. In addition, we offer attractive working conditions with scope for creativity, teamwork and good equipment for dedicated teachers.

What does the GOST mean for the school community? Will or should there be a separation between primary school and Sek I and II?

No, we are and will remain a community school (*Gemeinschaftsschule*) with full conviction: with joint activities, overlapping staff, all-day program, bilingualism, STEM focus and a school leadership team. How we structure and organize everything in concrete terms is something we will be working out in the school leadership team over the course of the next 2.5 years until the start of GOST in the 2024/25 school year.

Many grammar schools offer the possibility for the child to go abroad for a year to study in an English-speaking country. Are we thinking of offering this?

Of course there will be this possibility. Parents can then pause the contract. However, it remains to be considered at a bilingual school whether this is necessary at all, since the young adults come out of school with the *Abitur*, an international degree, language skills at a native level in DE and EN and then perhaps simply begin their studies outside of Germany in English or take a relaxed year abroad after school or at university when they are already 18, independent and have all the opportunities and freedom that this entails? Perhaps an internship and/or work & travel programme in the summer holidays after grade 10, 11 or 12 is more appropriate.

Are there any thoughts about offering cross-grade courses?

If this is permissible and makes sense, then yes. We will look into that.

Is the Baccalauréat degree planned?

We will check this, but we suspect that only either the Baccalauréat or the Abitur according to the Berlin framework curriculum is possible, and that the two are not compatible. Furthermore, as far as we know, the Baccalauréat is in French and not possible at our school as a German/English bilingual school.

Isn't the establishment of a *gymnasiale Oberstufe* complicated and the road rocky? Do those responsible feel up to the task?

We already planned a grammar school upper when the Platanus School was founded in 2010 and can now use this work as a blueprint. We don't find the structure complicated at all, because everything has already been designed once and we are excellently prepared. In addition we have highly qualified pedagogical staff and leadership team with the necessary experience and motivation.

We are very excited to build the Upper Secondary School and to plan and implement it together with our students and you. We are creating a continuous educational path from kindergarten to the *Abitur* in a bilingual educational institution and are happy that you are part of it.