

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

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Aimee Hall
2008 Diploma Programme graduate
2006 IB Middle Years Programme graduate
International School of Tianjin, Tianjin, China



Why did you originally decide to pursue the Diploma Programme? What appealed to you about the programme?

My school, the International School of Tianjin, exclusively offered the continuum of IB programmes. I had already had a positive experience with the MYP, so I was happy to continue with the IB diploma. I think that in general I liked that IB programmes encouraged open discussions and critical thinking, as well as studying and trying out different kinds of subjects.

As an IB student, how did you shape your studies to your interests? What courses were most valuable?

At the time that I started my IB diploma, and even by the end of it, I still didn't have a clear idea of my main interests or what kind of career I wanted, so I just decided to make the most of my time over those two years. I chose one subject from each of the six groups offered at my school, including music and Mandarin Chinese, and joined as many extracurricular activities as I could. I would say that this overall experience was very valuable to me, as I was able to explore my options further and just enjoy learning.

Tell us about your current work—was there a moment when you knew you wanted to pursue this career?

I have been working in purchasing and procurement for almost four years. When I first started working in this field, I realized that it was a good way to utilize and expand on my Mandarin Chinese language skills and understanding of Asian culture in particular, as most of the company's suppliers are based in China or Southeast Asia.

Who inspired you most as an IB student?

The teacher that left the strongest positive impression on me was my Mandarin Chinese teacher. Although he was a native English speaker as well, he had put a lot of time and energy into learning Mandarin Chinese and several other languages. I was always so impressed that he was then able to go on and teach in Mandarin Chinese, and that he really understood the challenges of learning as a native English speaker. This showed me that if you are passionate and determined enough, you really can achieve anything you set your mind to.

Did the extended essay, TOK, and CAS prepare you for university?

I think that the extended essay helped prepare me for doing research essays in university, particularly as this was the main form of assessment in my course—I learned early on that once you have survived the extended essay, other research essays that follow can seem like a breeze!

TOK and CAS both helped me with my international business and management studies in university, but in different ways. TOK helped me think about the best ways that I could keep myself motivated and productive during my course, because it really helped me get into the habit of reflecting on how I was learning and responding to different situations. On the other hand, CAS allowed me to have my first experiences in leadership and working in teams, which I was then able to build on both during my studies and in my work.

Did you face any obstacles during your education, studies or career? How did you overcome them?

I think that the biggest obstacle I faced both during my university studies and work was assimilating back into living in my home country after so many years abroad, in an international environment. I found myself naturally gravitating towards the international student groups in my university, and found it hard to relate to Australian students or co-workers that had lived in the same country for their whole lives. I have mostly overcome this by continuing to socialize with different groups of people and getting used to being Australian again. However, I have also realized that it is okay if I don't always fit in with everyone—this is part of the gift and curse of being a "third culture" or "international school" kid!

What advice do you have for current IB students that are thinking about a career like yours?

If you are thinking of going into a business-related field such as purchasing or procurement, the best thing to do is to get as much experience working with and studying people from different cultures as you can, and try to understand the different ways that they think and act. Working hard to develop your second language will also help.