

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

"The extended essay taught me more than just how to write...the extended essay also gave me experience to highlight for the university essay process."

Zheng "David" Zong
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Zheng completed the IB Diploma Programme (DP) at Shanghai World Foreign Language Middle School in 2016. He is currently a student at Boston University, planning to focus his studies on both communications and human health and biology.

Why did you originally decide to pursue the IB Diploma Programme?

The reason I decided to pursue the DP is due to its advanced courses, global recognition, and the potential gains from the core courses including Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), theory of knowledge (TOK) and the extended essay (EE). I was determined to further my studies in the United States after I graduated, and the DP helped get me into well-known universities.

As an IB student, how did you shape your IB Diploma Studies to your interests?

I chose to take Chinese A, literature higher level (HL), English B HL, Japanese AB initio standard level (SL), economics HL, biology SL and mathematics SL. My two main interests in high school were communication and biology. Coming from an IB World School with multi-cultural activities, my dream is to pursue a career in international communication, with connections to biological sciences. The two may seem detached, but I believe that modern sciences are more than just knowledge, but also about the daily applications of science. With my love of communication and science, I would like to further explore the possibility of incorporating the two. Due to the high amount of information flow, misconceptions of scientific concepts are potentially harmful to the world, particularly around personal health and environmental sustainability.

Was there a moment during your studies when you knew you wanted to pursue these interests?

Before the DP, I founded a club named RadiationStudio. We designed posters, and produced short videos regarding school events so that more teachers and students would know about the activities. When began the DP, I continued the club with 30 students and re-named it RadiationStudio CAS. Through this project, I found that using media technologies with the student union attracted many teachers and students to school events. I introduced a Student Union WeChat platform to promote school events on and off campus. It became the place for great videos and visual products in school. I became very passionate about the field of communications and realized the important impact of this work.

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Did the skills you developed during the DP prepare you for university?

During my DP courses, I was able to develop my critical thinking skills, especially through TOK. I explored the relationship between personal superstition and the formation of scientific knowledge. This led to a deep understanding of perceptions toward scientific knowledge, source reliability, and social impact.

The extended essay offered me a fantastic and unforgettable experience. Working on the essay taught me more than just how to write. My essay explored how a popular US TV series contributed to public views on conflict and war – drawing a connection between mass media and public perception. The EE also gave me experience to prepare for the university essay process, taught me how to communicate with advisors, and offered great practice in time management.

Before the DP, I had been studying in the Chinese education system. The DP and the Chinese system are very distinctive. Outside of differences in academic subjects, my international high school offered me many opportunities to participate in international activities with cultural significance. Through my work with the student union, I organized cultural weeks to explore the traditions of other cultures.

Did you face any obstacles during your studies?

The first semester of my second year in the DP was a busy five months. All students in our school faced various assessments, the extended essay, college applications and a lot of daily work. There was also pressure from standardized exams like the SATs, and some of the international students had to take language proficiency exams and tests in the local curriculum. It's definitely one of the hardest semesters I have ever had, but there were also a lot of benefits. I learned how to deal with stress and pressure, and gained time management skills as preparation for university life.

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