

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

"In university, many of the major assignments require a lot of research and detailed organization, but have a much tighter time frame. The extended essay gives students a sample of what is to come in the next stage of their life."

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Hugh Hsu completed the IB Diploma Programme (DP) in 2015 at Fudan International School. He is currently attending the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) where he is studying global business. He is interested in entrepreneurship and startup companies after he completes his studies.

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

The DP is universally known as a very rigorous programme that encourages students to push themselves not just in academics, but athletics, arts and service learning as well. This appealed to me, because there is no better way to grow mentally than overcoming multiple challenges at once.

However, the DP isn't all about pushing yourself and challenging yourself, there is more to it. Part of its' goal is also to help students attain the ten IB Learner Profile attributes: inquirer, knowledgeable, thinker, communicator, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-taker, balanced, and reflective. The deeper vision that the DP represents makes it all the more enriching.

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

I both shaped my studies to my strengths and interests and at the same time I picked courses that were not familiar to me. These new courses included English Literature A1 higher level (HL) and chemistry HL. It is definitely more challenging to take courses that you are unfamiliar with, but since I had to stick to the same six courses for two years, I wanted to learn completely new things and discover new interests that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to study. These two challenging courses turned out to be among the most valuable.

My English course challenged me to write in different styles, and also to read from completely new perspectives. Writing and analytical reading were never my strong strengths, but the course provided me with a new perspective of seeing not just literary text, but life – the ability to 'step into someone else's shoes' through their writing.

The same goes with chemistry. I was never too familiar with this topic, and at the beginning of the course my lack of knowledge was very apparent. As I challenged myself to understand the concepts, and apply them through labs, my ignorance gradually decreased, and I eventually developed a newfound appreciation for the scientific advancements in our society today.

Did the extended essay (EE), theory of knowledge (TOK), or CAS prepare you for university? Are there skills you developed that you still use today?

The EE gave me a little taste of what major university assignments are like. In university, many of the major assignments require a lot of research and detailed organization, but have a much tighter time frame. The EE gives students an idea of what is to come in the next stage of their life, and it prepares students for it. The EE is definitely a challenge, but when you get to university you'll get a head start compared to other students who have never written an extended essay-like assignment.

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

One of the obstacles I faced during the DP was learning how to prioritize. Outside of my studies, I was highly involved in student government and our high school basketball team. Both required a lot of dedication and time. Trying to deliver the best I possibly could in all three aspects was definitely a challenge, but the key is to tackle each one separately, and with a supportive team. Having a supportive team can definitely decrease the level of work that's required from you, and help you to achieve your goal in a more efficient manner.

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