

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

"The IB diploma does not prepare you only for university, it prepares you for life."

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José completed the IB Diploma Programme (DP) at Davy College in 2011. He is currently studying mining engineering at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Why did you originally decide to pursue an IB diploma?

My oldest sister had taken the Diploma Programme two years ago and told me that those years were worth it. The DP did not have the same format as the courses taken during my previous high school years. It was a more dynamic framework that you can adapt according to your needs regarding your career choice. It was a great choice.

As an IB student, how did you shape your DP studies to your interests?

Although I decided to study mining engineering, I also believe that foreign languages open many doors. That is why I enrolled in English, Spanish and French. Now that I am at the University of Queensland in Australia with a scholarship, I believe I made a good decision. Most people have the stereotype that engineers must be mathematical geniuses and very poor communicators, which is far from reality. Now, with social conflicts and very strict regulations in the mining sector, we must know how to communicate effectively with different stakeholders.

Mathematics was a tough course for me at first, but I challenged myself. We decided to form study groups with my classmates and gather each weekend to solve past papers. As days passed by, I discovered that I was doing well in this course and even enjoyed it. When results were published, I was surprised I had a six! More than having learnt calculus or astrophysics, it was our will to learn and teamwork that was the most valuable.

Who inspired you most as an IB student?

There were teachers that encouraged me to overcome my limits in both academic and personal aspects. My Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) teachers helped me to develop skills that I did not know that I could have. At first, I liked to do things by myself, I was not comfortable working as part of a team. Then, in my first year of the DP, we had a CAS project to help repair a school in Agua Blanca, a community near Cajamarca. There, we slept in sleeping bags in a house without hot water for nearly a week. We developed a daily schedule to set responsibilities for each team member, like

washing dishes. My CAS teachers were very proactive and hands-on. They helped build up the stairs and paint the doors. Camping outdoors, leadership workshops, learning how to make jewellery, teaching mathematics to kids, and other activities helped me with my personal growth. Both of those teachers remain my close friends today.

Did the extended essay (EE), theory of knowledge (TOK), or CAS prepare you for university?

Definitely. I believe they are at the centre of the learning process and interact with the other courses in many ways. When teaming up for a mathematics study group or learning how to knit a scarf for gathering funds for my CAS activities, I challenged myself to get out of my comfort zone.

The EE helped me to think in advance and schedule everything. I must admit that before the DP, I did not plan ahead. I did my essay on mathematics, which allowed me to go a bit further attending higher level classes on Saturdays. Research skills, referencing, critical thinking - all of these are developed with the EE and are crucial for university work.

TOK continues to be one of the most valuable courses for me. There is always someone who thinks 'out of the box', someone who leads humanity to take the next step forward. It could be through the discovery of a cure for a disease or fighting for equal gender rights. Constant questioning helps you develop curiosity, even in everyday situations. These three core elements make the DP holistic and by far one of the best experiences I had.

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

Just enjoy the journey, accept the challenge to see things from different perspectives. Open your minds to a whole world of opportunities and experiences you will have during these two years that you will treasure throughout your lifetime. The IB Diploma Programme does not prepare you only for university, it prepares you for life.

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