

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

"I liked that the IB Diploma Programme would allow me to explore many different areas ... I ended up making a drastic switch from social sciences to engineering in college, which would have been much more difficult had I not had the broad range of interests that IB had helped cultivate."

Neamah Hussein
2013 Diploma Programme graduate
Dubai International Academy
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Neamah graduated from the Diploma Programme at the Dubai International Academy in 2013. She attends Princeton University, where she is studying computer science. She is currently an intern at Facebook.

Why did you originally decide to pursue an IB diploma?

I had a choice between doing A-Levels or the Diploma Programme (DP). I've always been very interested in the inter-sectionality of sciences, arts and social sciences, and after much research, I realized that while the A-Levels tend to focus on one area very well, my search for flexibility and inter-sectionality would be much better served by the IB diploma.

I liked that the Diploma Programme would allow me to explore many different areas. Ultimately, this proved to be the perfect decision for me, as I ended up making a drastic switch from social sciences to engineering in college, which would have been much more difficult had I not had the broad range of interests that IB had helped cultivate.

As an IB student, what courses were most valuable?

Since I wasn't sure what I wanted to study after high school, I took full advantage of the different areas of study in the DP to explore as much as I could. I was interested in international relations and law, so I took economics and English literature at the higher level (HL) to develop my writing and critical analysis skills. I was also potentially interested in medicine, and I wasn't ready to completely give up the sciences, so I took chemistry HL and biology HL.

The course that has helped me the most at university is English Literature. Writing critically and succinctly are invaluable skills that I'm still developing, even as a software engineer!

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

I'm currently in the tech field as a software engineering intern at Facebook. I didn't know anything about computer science in high school; I had no idea what it meant to "code" or to be a software engineer. The first time I considered pursuing a career in computer science was when I took my first computer science class in college. I had always been interested in technology, so I figured that college was the perfect time to take the plunge and learn something completely new.

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

Each of the three was valuable in different ways. Working on the extended essay was a small but necessary introduction to writing a research paper, which has definitely come in handy for university studies. One of the service activities that I did through Creativity, activity, service (CAS) turned into a major personal project that I can still use today to showcase some of my interests and skills. Theory of knowledge (TOK) is perhaps the most difficult to evaluate, since it's the most intangible. That being said, the methods of critical thinking and the questions that we were encouraged to ask in TOK are crucial to navigating today's multicultural and connected world.

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

Neamah Hussein
2013 Diploma Programme graduate
Dubai International Academy
Dubai, United Arab Emirates



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

One of the biggest obstacles I faced was my own second-guessing, every step of the way. I questioned whether I was choosing the right major, whether I was entering the right career, whether I was doing the right activities, whether I was good at what I did... and the list goes on.

I can't say I've completely overcome this, but I'm well on my way. At some point, it became clear to me that regardless of the decisions I make, I'll learn something. Even if that ends up being the "wrong decision", I believe there's no such thing as learning the "wrong lesson".

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

Enjoy your learning experience and don't be afraid to take chances with things that you think you might not be good at!

I have three other pieces of career-specific advice:

- I truly believe that math HL is an asset no matter what you end up studying. I didn't take math HL, a decision that set me back a couple of classes in university, [and would have done so] regardless of whether I studied engineering or social sciences.
- There's no "perfect formula" of classes for a specific career. Take what's interesting, challenging and purposeful to you. The more diverse your knowledge, abilities and skills, the better!
- Had I known that I wanted to study computer science, I would have taken math HL and physics HL.

www.ibo.org/recognition