

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

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Alison Li completed the Middle Years Programme (MYP) at Beijing City International School, China and the Diploma Programme (DP) at the Nord Anglia International School Shanghai, China before beginning her university studies at McGill University, Canada.

How has your perspective changed since your days as a DP or MYP student?

I am a student who learns new things every day. I finished MYP with a sense that I could have done better, which powered my drive through DP, encouraging me to value my own mind and apply to a university I would not have thought myself worthy of attending. When I graduated from the DP, I wanted more and am now on the way to obtain what I want. I want to learn more, to think more, to be more, and to do more. I chose to channel these ambitions into the study of history at McGill University. History was a subject introduced to me by the MYP, in a way that I had not experienced before.

I remember my 16-year-old self, feeling overwhelmed by the contrasting interpretations of a single historical event evidenced by school textbooks of different countries. It was a very important revelation, as until then, I had only learned history as if it was a factual narrative of the world. I think this is something incredibly important for current IB students to understand because it relates to the purpose of the theory of knowledge (TOK) component of the DP—not to take the knowledge we have for granted, to be conscious of how knowledge comes into existence, and the ways it is presented to us. This is the most important thing to understand in a world where not every student is encouraged to question what they know and what they are learning.

How well did the MYP prepare you for future study, especially study in the DP?

MYP prepared me for subject selection when the DP years began. I had the chance to learn about everything offered in the areas of the arts, technology, humanities, sciences and language. In retrospect, I am grateful for the choices I had because not every education comes with such an emphasis on being a balanced learner.

Did the MYP personal project and DP extended essay prepare you for university?

The personal project allowed me to explore my musical side as I chose to learn to play the violin. The 4,000-word personal project report was helpful in building up to the 4,000-word extended essay. In my first year of university, the entire extended essay process has already been applied several times over. I now find myself doing an equivalent to four extended essays at a time. It is safe to say that the research components of IB prepared me very well for university.

What skills did you gain through the MYP community project and the DP creativity, activity, service (CAS) component?

Though I remember the community and service component in MYP as a nuisance at the time due to the numerous required reflections, it gave me an advantage in the DP as someone who was already used to reflecting on CAS experiences with the IB learner profile in mind. I came to enjoy the reflection process and occasionally, I still do it. Awareness of my personal strengths and areas for improvement has been helpful in job interviews and applications, and this was actually one of the outcomes DP students could select for a CAS activity.

Who inspired you most as an IB student?

Coincidentally, both my MYP and DP coordinators, who were at different schools, inspired me most throughout my IB years. I believe both had a genuine love and respect for the IB that made me want to appreciate what I was going through. I remember curiously asking my DP coordinator if he had gone through an IB programme, and he said such an education did not exist in his day. That has probably left the biggest impression on me, especially as I have completed the IB diploma. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have access to an education; furthermore, not everyone will receive an IB education where they have the opportunity to engage with a variety of subjects, to learn about the world in a globalized context, and be encouraged to think beyond their comfort zone.