

## STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

*"The internal assessments and extended essay provided immense academic and creative freedom to explore intellectual curiosities that lay beyond the curriculum."*

Namrata Haribal  
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Namrata Haribal completed the IB Diploma Programme at Oberoi International School, India. She is completing her university studies at the Minerva Schools at KGI, an innovative global program that combines four years of world travel with rigorous, interdisciplinary study.

### Why did you originally decide to pursue the IB Diploma Programme (DP)?

Before the DP, I studied in the Indian education system. In the former, we attend junior college after grade 10, which is equivalent to years one and two of the DP. In junior college, students are required to pick between three streams: arts, commerce, and science. Picking one stream means that a student cannot academically pursue subjects from the other two streams. This was frustrating because the system discouraged holistic learning by implying that one-dimensional education would prepare me for life. Therefore, from the beginning, the DP was a solution to a major frustration; it provided everything that I appreciated about the Indian education system, while solving the fundamental flaw in it. In fact, what I liked even more about the DP is that it recognizes that students' interests in courses vary and lets them pursue interests at a level in which they are comfortable. Such design choices showed me, from the very beginning, that it truly cares about its students.

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

The Internal Assessments (IAs) and Extended Essay (EE) provided immense academic and creative freedom to explore intellectual curiosities that lay beyond the curriculum. For instance, we "[explored] mathematics in a real life area" in our mathematics exploration. I calculated how much I mathematically deviate from the perfect face.

I realized while most people deviate from the classical face, the deviation is only minor. For the first time, I truly understood what the statement "everybody is beautiful in their own way" meant. Back then, I was struggling with body image insecurities and my solace came from an unexpected source. This was possible because of the freedom I had; while I was never the best at mathematics, I had managed to internalize concepts — some that weren't even a part of the curriculum — along with making it an extremely meaningful initiative for me. There was similar value in every course, provided one was committed to making the most of the opportunities.

### Tell us about your current studies. Was there a moment when you knew you wanted to pursue this subject?

Prior to the DP, I spent a year in France on an exchange program with Rotary International. My exchange fostered a curiosity about languages and other cultures, and I wanted to continue nurturing this inquisitiveness through my higher education. This is why, when applying for colleges, I was specifically looking for a program of study that would let me live and learn in many countries. Although I was in the first year of college at IE University, Spain, studying Business and International Relations when I discovered the Minerva Schools at KGI, I knew in my heart that I had found the place I truly wanted to be.

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**Who inspired you most as an IB student? Did you have a mentor or teacher that left a strong positive impression?**

In my first year of the DP, I had a teacher called Mr. Best who taught English and theory of knowledge (TOK); like his name, he was really the best! A talented facilitator with a passion for teaching, he was able to bring the classroom to life — an experience unlike any other. He set up the classroom in a roundtable format, so everybody looked at one another in class. This structure leveraged the power of facial expressions and body language along with speech and discourse, massively improving the classroom experience.. But that was not it. Mr. Best gave us the freedom to redesign the space during in-class activities, which elicited student contribution to class structure. Such simple gestures unleashed creativity. It was definitely under his guidance that I began learning purely for the sake of learning.

**Did the Extended Essay, TOK, or CAS prepare you for university? Are there skills you developed that you still use today?**

Learning how to think, reason, and structure arguments — some of the many skills I learned through doing EE, TOK, and Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) — extend beyond the reign of academia. For instance, TOK introduced diverse structures of debate, which helped me to think more clearly and structure my arguments better. Similarly, through writing weekly CAS reflections, I was able to develop a process on how to meaningfully reflect on experiences. Through the EE, I gained insight into how

to write quality research papers. From analysis and exploration to discussions and debating, these skills — while utterly academic — are those I use on a daily basis. All in all, I found that the design of the IB curriculum focused on helping students develop useful habits for a lifetime.

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

The IB is designed to help you pursue specific interests: the same goes for Minerva. To ensure that you aren't overwhelmed by the multitude of possibilities, you should identify and define priorities and use those as a method for choosing experiences. For example, some focus on building student clubs while others expand their network in the city. The key is to ask yourself what you really want from the institution and the cities, because your time is limited and there is much to do. Just remember to not 'bite off more than you can chew'. And most of all, enjoy the experience!

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