



Harrison Mashaal (Pre-U '16)

Why did you opt for the IB Diploma Programme (IB DP)?

HM: I wanted to challenge myself academically and I felt that I would learn a lot more than if I were in the regular programme. I also thought that it would look great on my applications to colleges and universities.

Where are you now?

HM: I'm at Claremont McKenna College, not far from Los Angeles. I am currently studying economics and I have until my second semester to determine my direction. I will either take economics with a minor in finance, or I have the option of pursuing a master of arts in finance.

I chose Claremont McKenna because it is a small liberal arts college rooted in finance and economics, my areas of interest. Coming from the warm environment of LCC – a small, private school where the teachers knew my name – I didn't want to go to a big school with huge lecture halls and where my teachers wouldn't know me. Plus, California was my chosen destination, so Claremont McKenna was a perfect fit.

How did the IB Diploma Programme help you prepare for your post-secondary education?

HM: I admit that while in the programme, I was a bit discouraged because it was so challenging and I wasn't sure that it would be worth it. But I am happy that I stuck with it. I can't say if it played a role in my college and university acceptances, but I can say that I am much better prepared than the vast majority of my peers. A lot of students haven't taken some of the courses that I already took in the IB DP and some are even dropping out of classes that I find really simple. Not only am I more comfortable with the course content but I also have the skills to manage it.

Budgeting my time is one of the key skills that the IB DP helped me develop. Because you have to think quickly and write quickly for the IB exams, I learned how to work efficiently. Now I am able to get through tests with more confidence and less hesitation. And I use time better when it comes to my study habits. Plus, I have a very strong work ethic. IB taught me how to stay patient and persevere.

I also received college credits, which made my freshman year much easier than it would have been otherwise. For example, I was able to go right into the hi-level economics course and to waive the language course.

Would you recommend the IB Diploma Programme? What advice might you give a student who is considering it?

HM: I would recommend the IB DP now that I see how well prepared I am for my first semester of college. Maybe I missed out on a bit of leisure time but what I gained is a lot more valuable than playing Xbox. Students who enrol in the programme have to be committed to it, take it seriously, put in the work and budget their time properly.

Do you have long-term plans?

HM: After my four-year undergrad degree, I will likely head back to the east coast for grad school – probably in New York. I'm hoping that the internships I plan on doing this summer and next will guide me. I see myself doing one of two things: working in finance or in commercial real estate.