

How to make your IB credentials stand out in the university application process

As an International Baccalaureate (IB) student, you are distinctive and will bring a unique set of attributes to whatever university or college that you ultimately attend. The challenge is to how to bring those qualities, in addition to grades and standardized test scores, to the attention of admissions officers. Have you considered how best to describe your high school achievements in your university application?

IB Diploma (DP) and Career-related Programme (CP) students:

- know how to do independent research
- have a demonstrated foreign language skill
- contribute a global perspective to current events
- have given back to their communities through volunteerism and community service
- study the language, history and arts of diverse cultures, and approach problems from multiple perspectives
- have above-average time management skills and are exceedingly well-prepared for the rigour of college-level coursework.

Additionally, DP students take a year-long course to develop critical thinking, analysis, and explore ways of knowing (theory of knowledge (TOK)), while CP students bring work-related experience and a career-specific set of skills to their university application or resume.

Five more ways to emphasize your IB strengths:

1. Highlight your advanced writing skills: Completing multiple essays comes easily to IB students given the emphasis the programme places on self-reflection and written expression. IB students can capitalize further on this by using the interdisciplinary model of learning to respond to admissions questions from multiple perspectives.

2. Consider universities that accept individual portfolios:

Some universities allow students to submit individual portfolios of work. The DP and CP programmes place emphasis on the development of a student's abilities over time. IB students will have amassed a significant body of work in their personal portfolios and in the MYP personal project. Portfolio-based applications allow admission officers to understand how an IB student is reflective and critical in their work.

3. Nail the interview: DP students give multiple presentations over their two-year course work. The confidence and experience they develop in these public speaking opportunities will translate into a big advantage when interviewing for university admission, internships and work. Don't forget to mention your creativity, activity, service (CAS) project in addition to your academic credentials.

4. Recommendation letters that pack a punch: The recommendation letter remains a pivotal component of the application package. When soliciting recommendation letters that stand out, consider providing your teachers with an easy-to-reference profile of your high school history beyond academics. Include your extended essay topic, your personal project topic, your CAS project, foreign language abilities, participation in any international programmes of study, extra-curricular activities and course workload.

5. Show your global perspective: IB students have a strong sense of their cultural identity, and respect the values and differences of other cultures. Trained to think globally and act locally, IB students are required to participate in civic engagement through a community service project that ties into some aspect of their coursework.

