

IB

This special edition of the IB (GTC) Newsletter is designed and written by our first IBDP student cohort. They introduce the curriculum and philosophy of the IB education in their own words, as well as the feelings and comments from both teachers and students on the programme.



G.T. (Ellen Yeung) College
Secondary Section

Newsletter Issue 2 2020 Special Edition

The first IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) cohort at G.T. College is graduating soon! Our school's IB Department has grown considerably since the class of 2020 students first entered Pre-IB more than three years ago. Here's a brief recap of the three core elements that make up the philosophy behind the IB, and a review of what our classmates and teachers have learnt from our experience in the programme.

To our first IB Cohort



Prof. Rex Li Founder & Curriculum Director

Dear IB graduates,

Happy graduation, my students. You are GT's first cohort of IB graduates and I am so proud of your great performance. Your hard work has paid off. Keep it up!

When you enter into another stage of your life, don't forget to keep learning and exploring. In times of difficulties, GT is always here to help.

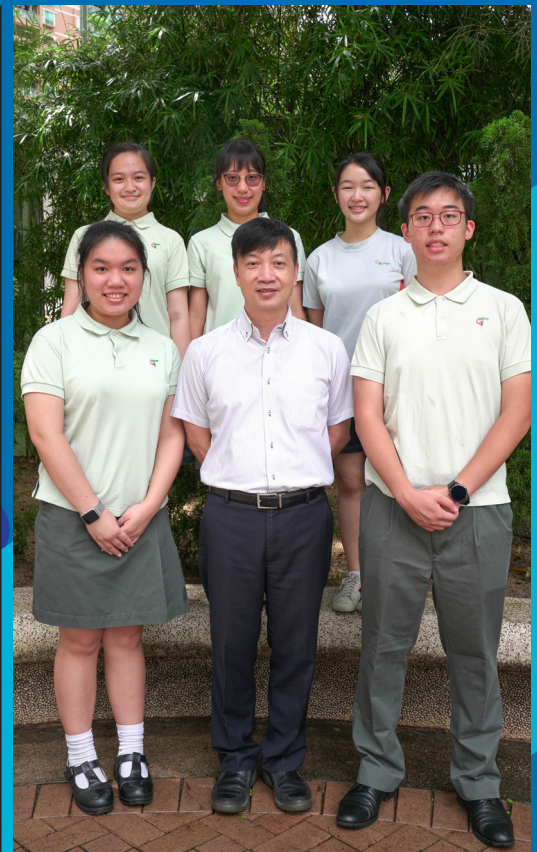
All my best

Dr. Raymond Tam School Principal

"The International Baccalaureate® (IB) learner profile describes a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that go beyond academic success" (see <https://www.ibo.org/benefits/the-ib-teaching-style/>). Those human capacities include the qualities of the learners being thinkers, communicators, creators, and risk takers, whose qualities match the vision and mission of GT's gifted education, and they are simply the personality traits of our G.T. students.

GT has its first cohort of IB graduates in July 2020. Looking backward, the path has been uphill. With some constraints from the IB authorization, the process of our IB application was long and far from smooth. The relatively smaller number of students allowed in one IB class and the first year of IB learning amid the global pandemic have created much challenges for the first cohort. C'est la vie... as you might put it, our G.T. IB learners have never failed to brace themselves for any hardships.

In the absence of any track record for the first IB results, we cannot have too high the expectations of the IB assessed performance as we usually do in our public assessments. Although the global health situation is still worrying, we must keep going and have faith in our own potential and strengths. Hereby, I wish every G.T. IB graduate excellent health, scores, and a pathway to success.



The Three Components

TOK

Theory of knowledge touches on the philosophy behind knowledge. It questions the conditions required for a belief to constitute knowledge, or the potential sources of knowledge and how they are justified.

EE

The extended essay offers the opportunity for students to investigate a specific topic of interest and formulate a 4000-word research paper on their own. While it seems burdening to fresh IB students, under the guidance of teachers and experience of running into walls, students have gradually developed their independence, research and writing skills expected at university.

CAS

Creativity, activity, service (CAS) is an important balance to the pressures of the IB. It can be any experience initiated by students to enhance their personal or interpersonal skills, such as physical exertion and voluntary work. Students write reflections afterwards to summarise each profound encounter, cherishing their joyful learning experiences.



How we think about IB Subjects

Chinese

In the beginning of year one, we were very confused when approaching Chinese from another perspective. We explored the interactions between the text, the author, readers, and the context, which were different from what we had been doing since primary school. It was nonetheless interesting and surprising to discover the unfamiliar side of our mother language, learning the roots of writing Chinese characters.

English

The syllabus is divided into five parts: identities, experiences, human ingenuity, social organization and sharing the planet. The content is very different from what we have learnt before in English. Instead of learning only grammar and vocabulary, we explore knowledge from different aspects and learn more about the world. Besides, we study literary works which makes us understand more about English, exploring the styles of famous novelists.

Mathematics

The Mathematics syllabus has a broad scope covering various topics. In the calculus option, we touched upon some first-year university mathematics. Surprisingly, with lots of hard work and guidance from our teacher, it was still manageable. The most captivating part of the subject is the internal assessment, in which we all chose a topic of our interest to further explore, widening our horizons.

Physics

The Physics syllabus ranges from topics learned in G10 like force and motion to topics exclusive to the IB such as quantum physics. In my opinion, there is quite a difference between HL and SL, so students should choose carefully by considering their level of interest and ability towards Physics.

Chemistry

You can have a deep understanding equivalent to university level if you drill into the textbook. However, if your goal is having high marks, writing notes based on the syllabus and doing past papers is enough. It's challenging to memorize all the complicated concepts, so you should decide to revise which topics, getting ready to learn more strategically.

Biology

We dive into topics from genetics to animal physiology and ecology. Apart from exam-based knowledge, we also discuss ethical issues, learn to use databases and develop practical laboratory skills. HL and SL students study Biology in quite a different breadth and depth. For instance, only HL needs to learn about plant biology!

Economics

IB Economics includes macroeconomics, international economics and development economics. The assessment is conducted in 2 papers: essay-writing and data response. There is an extended part of calculations assessed by a third paper exclusively for HL. Both levels have to complete 3 news commentaries for internal assessment. All components of the syllabus highly depend on evaluation skills, so it's important to get them mastered!

Geography

SL students have 3 core units and 2 options while HL students have 6 and 3 respectively. The first paper tests the option units while the second paper is based on the core units, each containing essays and data-based questions. HL students have an extra paper 3 that is full of essays. We are also required to go on field trips individually to conduct our internal assessment based on the syllabus.

Visual Arts

IB VA students have to complete a process portfolio (PP), a comparative study (CS), and an exhibition which includes 4-7 pieces of artwork for SL students and 8-11 at HL. Make sure you have gone through a variety of art-making forms, with documents and relevant elaboration. As many artworks' creations are closely related to certain art movements, you have to dig deeply into art history. Understanding the historical backgrounds of artworks and their creators will definitely help you in writing PP and CS.

Music

Music is going to have a new syllabus starting from September 2020. It requires a recital performance, a composition and an analytical essay, but no exam! However, the subject can be difficult even for those who have passed the ABRSM Grade 8 exam for any instrument. On the other hand, music brings variety to IB studies. It is an escape from other subjects. Those of us preparing for Music in the IB or the DSE help each other, all supported by our great teacher.

After 2 years studying IBDP.....

Priscilla Lung

“The IB programme is tough, but I never regret choosing it, because I really learnt so much in this programme. Although the workload was large from all these essays and projects, I learnt many skills and knowledge that I cannot get in the textbook and they are useful for my whole life. The IB gives you the freedom to discover which makes your study fun and enjoyable.”

Tony Chui

“To say the IB programme is easy would be illegal. A day in the life of an IB student would be 8 hours of school, 3 hours of tutorials, 6 hours of writing essays and 7 hours of everything else. Yet, I have come to love the enormous flexibility of the IB programme, where I can present about my favorite sitcom Brooklyn 99 or write an extended essay about coffee. It is hard work, but it pays off, and it’s pretty awesome.”

Jean Ng

“Studying the IB has a lot of advantages, like how many of us got conditional offers from Hong Kong universities in February, which significantly reduces the pressure of the last semester of secondary school and helps in dealing with the COVID-19 situation. Be prepared to start working immediately after the programme begins, as there are many assignments and deadlines. Luckily, G.T. teachers are always there to offer guidance and assistance.”

Charlotte Wong

“The IB did not only equip me with knowledge, but also time-management and research skills. This is a brand new program to me with loads to explore, yet it was a fascinating journey to discover what you are good at and how to prepare yourself for college life. Indeed, there were lots of hard times. My experience in the IB gave me the foresight to push through difficulties and to understand the power of hard work.”

Jonathan Ling

“For me, being an IB student requires a lot of self-control and time management because 24 hours are not enough to use. We have many things to do, to plan and to study, especially when the syllabus for some subjects are large. They require us to study extra stuff outside of the syllabus and memorize international examples. Nonetheless, IB strengthens my presentation skills and essay-writing skills.”

Pascal Lai

“I think the IB gave me a taste of what it’s like to study at university, since there are a lot of essays and individual-based work similar to university. I strongly advise students to finish most IAs and EEs in grade 11, so there will be sufficient time to study for the final exam in grade 12. The amount of workload might be intimidating at first but you will get used to it.”

Janet Wong

“Frankly, the IB course is quite demanding, but I did enjoy and consider the experience worth it. Language and TOK allowed me to think critically and in a different angle, whereas the Humanities and Science lessons provided me with ample insights into the nature and implications of different subjects in real life. Becoming better at stress management and using technology are the most valuable skills I have acquired throughout the journey.”

Megan Louie

“Taking the IB was definitely a challenging but rewarding experience for me. Looking back, the fact that we had managed to meet deadline after deadline during the most hectic weeks of the programme seemed almost like a miracle. The best thing about the IB is that it pushes you to your limit and out of your comfort zone in ways that allow you to understand yourself better, like helping you identify the habits that lead you to failure and discover strengths you never knew you had.”

Jenny Chan

“You have to be brave with everything in the IB. The IB allows you to bear your own responsibilities and you must set your own standards and targets. It’s important to be adventurous and to take risks, as you will always find yourself to have revolutionary breakthroughs that are beyond your imagination.”



Our teachers.....

Dr. Vincent Tam (Biology)

“Teaching IB Biology is an enlightening experience to me as some topics which are omitted in the HKDSE curriculum reappear in the IB curriculum, and the guidance on both IA and EE projects reignite my interest on research and data analysis.”

Ms. Jacyn Fong (English B)

“Teaching English B has been a pleasure to me. As a lot of autonomy is given under the curriculum, I can design my lessons creatively by including various classroom activities such as debate, gallery walk and mini drama to engage my students. Of course, active participation of GT students is also the main reason I find teaching IB enjoyable.”

Mr. Ryan Cheng (Mathematics)

“After two years of the IB diploma program, I found that our students had grown up a lot both mentally and academically. They became more mature after handling different deadlines of their IAs. They became more knowledgeable after they had completed the whole syllabus of Mathematics (SL/HL). I am so proud of you of what you have learned in your secondary school life.”

Mr. Adrian Mok (Chemistry)

“I feel privileged to teach G12A IB Chemistry. After the students submitted their course work, I felt like arriving at the end of a roller-coaster ride. Now, we can only wait and see the results. But in my mind, I have already awarded at least “good” to my students.”



Mr. David Chan (Geography)

“Teaching IB Geography is a challenging task for this academic year. Through the participation of the Internal Assessment and the Extended Essay, teachers and students can benefit a lot of geographical knowledge and techniques. Also, through the teaching and learning processes, we can acquire global knowledge through the use of the Internet so that we can broaden our horizons effectively and efficiently.”

Mr. Jerwa Ip (Economics)

“IB Economics is more complicated than DSE Economics as the curriculum is broader. For instance, the essay requires arguments of both sides and the skills of refutation. The DSE is more straightforward and only requires to meet the point of marking. The effort used to prepare the IB lesson is more than the DSE lesson because the teachers need to know the skills which include writing an essay, applying reading comprehension skills and doing calculation skills.”

Ms. Luna Lu (Chinese A)

“2年來與同學一起邊學邊教的生涯，隨著12A班同學的畢業即將落下帷幕。而令我印象最深刻的，莫不是起初佈置論文時同學的一片悲啼哀嚎的可愛模樣。漸漸地，同學們與我互相磨合，上堂積極投入起來，開始主動學習寫論文的方法，對文學作品感同身受。慢慢地，同學們個個都化身為IB學霸，加血、升級、打怪，好不暢快！所以，我也暗自下定決心，誓要每堂課都讓同學有所收穫。下半學期，疫情突襲，我們只好轉到了網上教學，感謝學校為我們提供的各種資源，感謝同學的耐心配合，確保我們的教學流暢無礙。”

Ms. Queenie Liu (Music)

“I am glad to be a member of teaching IB Music at GT. While striving to facilitate IB students' academic learning, enhancing our students' multiple intelligence as well as whole-person development, we emphasize them all-round development ranging from their multifaceted talents in different fields to essential generic skills such as positive thinking and problem-solving. We believe that our students can become all-round leaders in the future through our collaborative efforts.”

The cancellation of IB exam

Although the IB is a brand new idea to us, we have done our best to study it and give all our effort in it so that we can achieve a satisfying result. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, the IBO has decided to cancel our written examinations. In this section, we wrote about our feelings towards the cancellation of our exams and what we have been doing since then.

Our class teacher updated us with the news quickly after the decision had been declared by the organization itself. As everyone is going through the same kind of emotions, it is comforting to talk with people in the same circumstances and it stops us from panicking.

Our weekly online class meetings served not only an informative purpose in keeping up with news from the IBO, but also a huge comfort as we got to see our fellow classmates' and teachers' faces after a long while.

There have been many ups and downs throughout our IB journey, but we've all learnt a lot from it both as students and as teachers. Now that we've finally reached the end of the road. Here are our thoughts and feelings about the programme as a whole.



Geoffrey Leung

“The first moment when I heard that the IB exams were cancelled, I was in disbelief. When more information was given, I realized that I had to accept the hard truth. My feelings were mixed as I was happy that I don’t have to take any more exams until university but I was also very disappointed since the effort I put in before is like down the drain. To be honest, at some point I prefer having the exams back.”

Arthur Lee

“My emotions are a combination of frustration, disappointment and apprehension. As this is the first time in history that the IBO has cancelled the exams, literally no one knows what is going to happen. Luckily, the IBO has soon announced that they will replace the original exams with our internal assessments. Since we have done everything we can and I have faith in my IAs, it is up to the IBO to determine my results.”

Elizabeth Lam

“The cancellation of IB exams was shocking, but it wasn’t out of my expectation since the pandemic has caused the cancellation of other exams. After the shock, the panic came as there were a lot of uncertainties on how the final grades would be calculated. Luckily, the panic and anxiety have faded as days go by because I’ve accepted that not everything is in my control. Letting go is important in certain times.”

Tyrone Lai

“The cancellation of the exams comes off as not as big of a surprise to me. Perhaps the shocker comes from it actually happened unlike other curricula cancellation of exams like the GCSE, but it is still disappointing that we cannot showcase our abilities through proper examinations.”

Vivian Law

“It was a shock to realize that my school life had ended all of a sudden. It was somehow a relief to me that there was nothing more I could do for my grades, despite the shame that an important milestone in my life had been skipped.”



To our 1st IB cohort, we are so proud of you!



12A (2019-2020)



Being the class teacher of the school's first IB cohort, I am honoured and excited. Moving on with all 12A students together with other IB subject teachers and core component teachers, we all made it through with a lot of effort and support to each other. Yes, together "We can".

Dr. Vincent Tam

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