

# NOVEMBER EDITION NEWSLETTER

## NOVA UNIVERSE

Welcome to the first edition of our monthly college newsletter, written by your Grade 10 Student Council Representatives Lana Filkova and Anika Friedman. In this newsletter, we will discuss and advise you on various aspects of your academic and college preparation, along with our mentor, the college counselor, Mrs. Irena Filkova. The topics addressed each month will introduce you to how college applications work and what revolves around them, including pre-college activities to help boost and headstart your college experience. If you have any suggestions or questions, feel free to contact one of your Grade 10 Student Council Representatives via email.

This month, we will cover:

- Supracurricular and Extracurricular Activities and Why They Matter
- Introduction to the Diploma Programme: Interview with the IB DP Coordinator, Ms. Viktorija Dimitrovska
- Academic Enrichment Programs
- Factors that go into the University Search

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### **SUPRACURRICULAR & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND WHY THEY MATTER**

High school, especially the first few years, is a time of exploration, trying things out, and figuring out your academic interests, passions, aptitudes, and potential career paths. The best way to do this is by engaging in supra and extracurricular activities. As the term suggests, supracurricular activities are academic activities or work undertaken by a student that go beyond the taught curriculum of their school studies. It is a way for students to demonstrate to universities their interest in and engagement with an academic subject beyond what the school curriculum offers. For example, a student who, down the line, wishes to pursue Political Sciences/International Relations may get involved in activities such as Speech and Debate, i.e., MEP/MUN, or involvement with student governance. Someone with an interest in STEM fields may engage in lab activities or become a member of the Robotics club. Alternatively, a student with an interest in journalism may be part of the school's newspaper club, while someone who wishes to become a doctor may shadow a doctor, volunteer at a hospital, or collaborate with

NGOs like the Red Cross. Pursuing academic research or doing academic enrichment programs, such as courses or summer schools, is beneficial in any academic area. There is no one activity that is “better” or that universities prefer over another; genuine passion and commitment, and evidence of independent exploration of a field are what matter most.

Extracurricular activities, on the other hand, are different in that they may not be necessarily related to the major a student will eventually pursue at university; for example, a future engineering student may enjoy being a part of the Chess, Drama or Dance club or an business and economics major may be involved in playing sports or being a party of the school Band. While not directly related, extracurricular activities may teach students important transferable skills, such as leadership, teamwork, creative and critical thinking, as well as enhance soft skills such as time management, responsibility, discipline, or resilience that are key to being successful in university.

Some of the **key benefits of extracurricular activities** include:

- **Improved academic performance** - studies show that participating in activities you are passionate about can increase your brain function, help you concentrate and manage your time better, all of which contribute to higher grades. High endurance sports, for example, will train you to focus and build stamina in the face of intense difficulty. This gives you an advantage when it comes to studying and taking exams.
- **Exploring interests and creating broader perspectives** - When you participate in multiple different activities, you'll get the opportunity to explore a range of interests and unlock passions you never knew you had! Plus, diversifying your interests subsequently broadens your worldview.
- **Higher self-esteem** - The more you achieve success through activities you're passionate about, the more your self-confidence will improve.
- **Social opportunities** - Each extracurricular activity you engage in provides you with another opportunity to expand your social network, make new friends, and get more deeply involved, which may lead to starting a club together or making a community impact.
- **Productive study breaks** - Extracurricular activities give you something fun to do aside from school. It also gives you the chance to explore your passions to discover things you may be interested in beyond academics while taking some time off from hitting the books.
- **Essential life skills** - one of the greatest advantages extracurricular activities give you is “real-world” skills. These skills include (but are not limited to): goal setting, teamwork, time management, prioritisation, problem solving, analytical thinking, leadership, and public speaking.

- **Building your resume/CV for university applications** - many universities use holistic assessment and want to see that you've gone above and beyond in your intended area of study and have made a difference and/or excelled in your field - they look for evidence of longevity, passion, leadership, and impact.
- **Universities may ask you to showcase your extracurricular involvement** in different ways - activity list/supplementary essays, or interviews. They are looking for students who will be academically successful and engaged in their community, so students need to start exploring their interests early and identify a handful of activities that they really enjoy and engage with those throughout all four years of high school.

To summarize, supra and extracurricular activities allow students to explore and focus their interests, demonstrate a specialty, show initiative and leadership, give students an outlet outside the classroom, deepen their knowledge of an academic subject, and develop transferable soft skills.

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME: INTERVIEW WITH THE IB DP COORDINATOR, MS. VIKTORIJA DIMITROVSKA**

### **1. What are the similarities and differences between the MYP and DP?**

The MYP focuses on learning skills, inquiry-based learning, and reflection, while the DP is more focused on content and assessment. In DP year 1, students encounter heavier course material, which is assessed through an increased number of exams rather than projects as summative assessments. Formative assessments still lead to summative assessments, but most are exam-style to teach students to work with a heavy course load. Unlike in the MYP, most DP courses use thick textbooks that contain all content in one place.

### **2. When do grade 10 students do their IB course selection? What does the selection process entail?**

The process of IB course selection typically begins in late February or early March, when students will be guided through the subject groups and the requirements for each subject. Then, students will be given some time to make the decision as to what courses they wish to pursue. Even before that, however, likely during December, a workshop will be held with students' parents to ensure that they are on the same page as the students, and to allow families to decide together what pathway the student will take. According to the Secondary School Principal, Ms. Bela Gligorova, the course selection should "tell a

story” of the student’s high school pathway, so that the student is well led and supported to their desired university.

### **3. How is the IB DP structured? What are the subject groups in the DP?**

The Diploma Programme is a two-year IB programme (grades 11-12) that includes six academic subjects and the additional DP core subjects. These subjects are Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay (EE). All students usually take three subjects at Higher Level (HL), which have a total of 240 teaching hours, and three subjects at Standard Level (SL), with 150 teaching hours.

- Theory of Knowledge (TOK): exploring how we know what we know, a three-semester course, including TOK exhibition and TOK essay.
- Extended Essay (EE): a 4,000-word independent research paper, similar to the personal project but more academic (externally assessed).
- Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS): a set of experiences that encourage balance, creativity, and community engagement.

### **4. Can you tell us briefly about the DP Core subjects?**

In NOVA, there are six subject groups:

1. Studies in Language and Literature
2. Language Acquisition
  - a. English B (new enrollment)
  - b. Spanish
  - c. German
  - d. French as a B language and Ab Initio
3. Individuals and Societies
  - a. Business Management
  - b. Economics
  - c. History
  - d. Psychology
4. Sciences
  - a. Biology
  - b. Chemistry
  - c. Physics
  - d. Sport, Exercise and Health Science
  - e. Computer Science
5. Mathematics
  - a. Mathematics: Analysis and Approaches (calculus-based)

- b. Mathematics: Applications and Interpretations (statistics-based)
6. The Arts (or another subject from Groups 2–4 as a replacement)
  - a. Dance
  - b. Theater

**5. What are the benefits of pursuing the Diploma Programme?**

The Diploma Programme develops academic rigor, time management, and global awareness, which are less targeted in the MYP. The programme is recognized worldwide by universities for its high academic standards and emphasis on independent thinking. Students often say that the DP helps them transition to university very smoothly as it develops necessary skills early on, and it does so better in comparison to other programmes.

**6. How is the DP relevant to university applications?**

Universities value IB students because they are taught to be well-rounded, analytical, and self-motivated. The Diploma Programme scores and coursework often lead to university credits or advanced placement, depending on the country in which students apply. Even for students who apply without the full diploma (only course credits), individual IB courses still strengthen their profiles and allow differentiation among other students.

**7. What are some important considerations students should have in mind before selecting their classes?**

Students should consider:

- Their strengths and interests (choose subjects they enjoy and do well in)
- University and career goals (some fields require specific HL subjects)
- Workload and balance (HL subjects demand more time and commitment)
- Language proficiency and math background, as these affect success in certain courses

**8. What is the alternative to pursuing the DP at NOVA?**

Students who choose not to pursue the full IB Diploma can still graduate with the NOVA High School Diploma, taking selected IB courses for certificates and course credits. Additionally, the school is exploring the Global Impact Diploma as an alternative pathway that emphasizes project-based learning and community engagement. However, this is still in the exploration phase, so more details will be shared with families once it is confirmed.

## ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS IN FOCUS

Pursuing academic enrichment programs in the form of summer camps, courses or research, residential or online, is an excellent way to delve deeper into an academic area of interest, discover other potential fields of study, engage in hands-on experiences, research, individual and group work, learn alongside peers from different backgrounds, get a taste of college-level academic work and a study abroad destination, develop your writing, presentation, collaboration, communication, critical thinking and research skills and boost your portfolio. We'll be featuring different options in every edition!

1. **PIONEER ACADEMICS**: excellence in research and getting 4 college credits from Oberlin College, for academically excellent students. This is an in-depth exploration of academic interests under the mentorship of university professors for college credit, producing a research paper in one of 22 disciplines, online (spring-to-summer or summer term).

**Pioneer**<sup>®</sup>  
academics

Spring-through-Summer Term		Summer Term	
February - April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Group seminar sessions</li> <li>✓ 5 sessions; 1.5 hours per session</li> <li>✓ 3-5 reading hours per week*</li> </ul>	June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Weekly group seminar sessions</li> <li>✓ 5 sessions; 1.5 hours per session</li> <li>✓ 6-10 reading hours per week*</li> </ul>
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Program intermission</li> <li>✓ Formulate research topic</li> </ul>	August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual research mentoring</li> <li>✓ 5 sessions; 1-1 hours per session</li> <li>✓ Formulate research topic</li> <li>✓ Write and edit research paper</li> <li>✓ The Pioneer papers are due by the end of August</li> <li>✓ 8-14 research hours per week*</li> </ul>
June - July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Individual research mentoring</li> <li>✓ 5 sessions; 1-1 hours per session</li> <li>✓ Write and edit research paper</li> <li>✓ 8-14 research hours per week*</li> </ul>	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Some students may be permitted to extend their due dates into September</li> </ul>

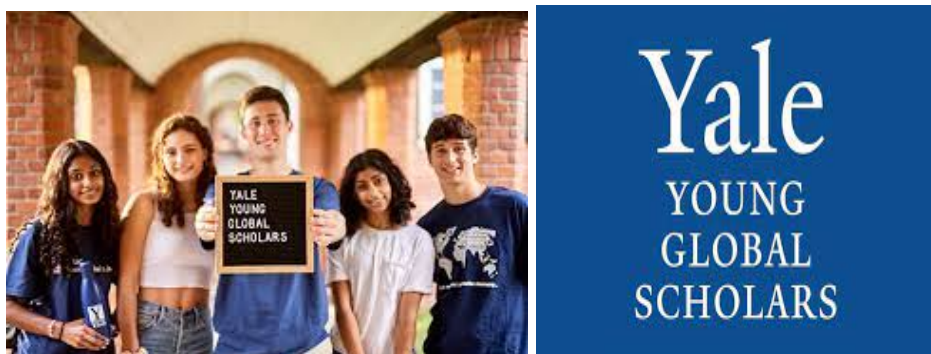
\* The above range of hours spent on research is the average as reported by surveyed Pioneer Scholars. The actual hours may vary.



Sample Pioneer Research concentrations and topics of NOVA students:

- The Neuroscience of Addiction
- Understanding the Self (Life Imitates Fiction: Assessing the Effects of Narrative Transport on Student Self-Esteem)
- Anthropology (Nonverbal Communication; Proxemics and Buses)
- Robotic elements in the science laboratory (Measuring Planck's Constant Using Light Emitting Diodes)
- Analysis of Musical Rhythm (Music/Music Theory)
- Stereotypes and prejudice - The Illusion of Empowerment: A New Paradigm for Body Image
- Human Design: Implications for Mental and Physical Health: "A Proposal for a Combined EEG and fMRI Study of the Tripartite 'Core-Self' Neural Subnetwork"

2. [YALE YOUNG GLOBAL SCHOLARS](#): interdisciplinary focus.



3. **BOCCONI UNIVERSITY SUMMER PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**: 2 weeks, 2 labs, in the areas of economics, game design, marketing, entrepreneurship, data science, finance, computer science, and much more.



4. **BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SUMMER CHALLENGE**: 2 weeks of engaging in lab work.



5. **ESADE SUMMER SCHOOL BARCELONA**:
  - Global Governance and Law Experience:  
<https://www.esade.edu/summer-school/en/programmes/global-governance-law-experience>
  - International Business Experience:  
<https://www.esade.edu/summer-school/en/programmes/international-business-experience>

# esade

RAMON LLULL UNIVERSITY

6. [CHARLES UNIVERSITY SUMMER SCHOOL](#): Prague, Czechia



## CHARLES UNIVERSITY

7. [CONSTRUCTOR UNIVERSITY SUMMER CAMP](#): Bremen, Germany



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### FACTORS THAT GO INTO THE UNIVERSITY SEARCH - THE CONCEPT OF FIT

While we are still grade 10 students, it's never too early to start thinking about what kind of university environment would be the best for us. A university experience is so much more than the name of a school or the program. When searching for universities, you should consider many factors to determine "best fit" as no one university can be the "best" for every student, nor is

there only one university for one person. Knowing yourself and your needs (academic/social/financial) is the first step in making the right choice of schools where you will be successful and happy, as well as thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

### **FIT:**

Is the school a fit for you? (even if you are impressed by the reputation of a school or its name is well known)

**F** - factors that go into the search

**I** - individual

**T** - tools you need as you go about narrowing down your choices

#### **1. F - FACTORS**

##### **The 5Ps**

- Person (the student)
- People (other students & community members)
- Program
- Place (physical and intangible aspect)
- Price

##### **PERSON - WHO AM I?**

Consider...

- Learning community size (small, medium, or large?)
- Public or private institution
- Individual learning style
- Social style
- Activities & interests
- Clubs/sports

##### **PEOPLE - THE STUDENT COMMUNITY/THE PEOPLE YOU WILL LEARN AND LIVE TOGETHER WITH**

Consider...

- Religious affiliation
- Domestic/international

- Diversity - cultural, geographic, political, socioeconomic, gender, etc.
- Activities and culture
- What do the activities, priorities, and atmosphere on campus tell you about the student population, their interests, and campus climate?

### **PROGRAM - HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE STRUCTURED?**

Consider...

- Major/minor, double major, certificates
- Curriculum - open/distribution/core
- Special programs
- Study Abroad/ 3+2 Engineering/ Co-op/Consortium/Internships
- Class sizes and structure
- Large lectures, small classes, 1:1 tutorials
- Individual attention

### **PLACE - HOW DOES THE LOCATION AFFECT STUDENT LIFE?**

Consider...

- Regional differences
- Rural/suburban/urban access/urban
- Closest international airport
- Public transportation, biking, owning/driving a car
- Climate & comfort

### **PRICE - WHAT IS THE FAMILY'S ABILITY TO PAY AND NEED?**

Consider...

- Need-based aid
- EFC (Estimated/expected family contribution)
- Non-need (merit) based aid
- Scholarships
- Loans (private/government/sponsoring organizations)
- COST OF ATTENDANCE
  - Tuition & fees
  - Room & Board (i.e. housing & meals)
  - Books
  - Health insurance
  - Transportation
  - Personal expenses

## 2. I - THE STUDENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL



## 3. T - TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR THE COLLEGE SEARCH

**Dedicate websites and search engines for different countries:**

- <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/> (US)
- [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) (UK)
- [www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl) (The Netherlands)
- [www.daad.de/en](http://www.daad.de/en) (Germany)
- [www.studyinprague.cz](http://www.studyinprague.cz) (Czechia)