



# IB入試推進室 NEWSLETTER

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## 6# EDITION FEATURE

*A look into the student lives  
of IB students in the*

**“Discovery Program for  
Global Learners”**

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### 1. Why did your Program decide to take IB students?:

We inherited the legacy of the Matching Program, which welcomed IB students. As my 2017 article, “Discovery Program for Global Learners at Okayama University and IB Education: Reflections on My University Experiences in Japan and the United States of America” in *Journal Research into IB Education* states, the affinity between Discovery Program and IB education is apparent. Most Humanity and Social Sciences faculty members at Discovery Program received their Ph.D.s in North America. In my case, I earned my Ph.D. in Sociocultural Anthropology at UCLA. I taught at liberal arts colleges, such as Colorado College, Hamilton College, and Smith College, in the U.S., where I polished my IB-friendly pedagogy before joining Okayama University.

### Q & A with Associate Professor Haeng-ja Chung

#### 2. What qualities do you look for in IB Students?:

Among the IB Learner Profile Attributes, I particularly value 1. Open-minded, 2. Reflective, 3. Risk-taking, 4. Caring, 5. Communicating, 6. Inquiring, 7. Thinking, 8. Knowledgeable, and 9. Principled.

Profiles of Exemplary Candidates;

1. Students who wish to turn their attention to diverse cultures and societies and have a desire to play an active role on the global stage.
2. Students who study actively on their own initiative in a broad range of fields and for language acquisition.
3. Students who can communicate with others well and are prepared to tackle issues by cooperating with fellow students.

#### 3. What do you think about IB Education?:

Many IB students state the affinity between Discovery Program and IB Education. Therefore, IB graduates have fostered the strength they gained in IB Education. I believe IB Education prepares them for:

1. sufficient English ability to participate in problem-solving activities in collaboration with other students from multicultural backgrounds.
2. the ability to formulate opinions and communicate their views to others.
3. the basic knowledge and study skills required for successful learning in their selected field.

The Program value these qualities.

#### 4. How to apply for Discovery Program?:

IB graduates (with IB Diploma or IB Certificate) have entered Discovery Program through one of the three entrance exam options in September, October, or December/January. Some IB students re-applied for and joined the program after they improved their profiles and applications, even if they were not accepted initially. We welcome many of you to apply for Discovery Program.

#### 5. Interview Exams

If you pass the first paper screen, you can meet our faculty members at the interview. If you live abroad, you may have an online interview. By then, understand the program thoroughly.

#### 6. How does Discovery value IB students?

Discovery Program already has been accepting more than forty IB students, the highest number of IB students among all the faculties at Okayama University. Most faculty members have lived in multiple countries and experienced various cultures. For example, I was born in Japan as a Korean national and taught in Japan and the United States for decades. Many Discovery students appreciate a multicultural learning environment. Therefore, we welcome IB students with multicultural backgrounds and experiences.

#### 7. More information about the Discovery Program?\*

Please see our website, available both in English and Japanese. To find a best-fit university and increase your chance of acceptance, understanding the program is crucial. We look forward to reading your application. Good luck!

## IB STUDENT LIFE

Student Name: Hana Tajiri



### Self Introduction

Hello everyone. My name is Hana, and I am a 2nd year Global Discovery Program (GDP) student majoring in Environmental Engineering. Born to a Malaysian father and a Japanese mother, I speak Malay and Japanese besides my first language, English. I lived in Malaysia, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates before moving to Okayama. I enjoy cycling as my pastime, and I am an avid fan of Japanese swords.

### Why Okayama University? Why GDP?

I have always wanted to live in Japan, and as I was looking for universities that offer environmental studies, I came across GDP. I also found out Okayama University is one of the few universities in Japan that takes in IB students, so I decided to take a shot. What intrigued me about this program is the diverse, interdisciplinary learning environment, which is similar to the IB approach. I can explore my interests across academic field boundaries, which allows me to look at issues from various angles. Moreover, with people coming from all over the globe, I have the opportunity to learn more about our disparities, which broadens my horizons and enables me to learn holistically. GDP is a small-scale program filled with wonders, and this is what makes learning an adventure. Therefore, I am sure this type of learning environment is for me, and I am fortunate to have found this program.

### Campus life

I began my first year with uncertainties due to the pandemic. Most of my lectures were held online, so it wasn't easy to interact with people. That being said, I learned to cope with the limited social interactions and make the most of virtual learning. My life in Okayama became more vibrant after a friend introduced me to a part-time job at the peach farm in spring during my freshman year. Not before long, I began working on the grape, cucumber, and yuzu farms for a total of 6 months. Since then, I have been working during the cultivating seasons. As much as I enjoy my academic life, I take pleasure in doing farm work. I would say this job gave me the opportunity to interact with new people and make more social connections.

### IB STUDENT LIFE

Student Name: Genki Hase



#### Brief life trajectory

Hi everyone! I am Genki Hase, a third-year student from the Discovery Program for Global Learners. I was born in Tokyo but soon moved to the Netherlands and Belgium, where I attended international schools and supplementary Japanese schools (*hoshuko*) until the age of 9. After moving back to Tokyo, I studied electronics and information engineering at the Tokyo Metropolitan College of Industrial Technology (TMCIT). However, the “cultural shock” I experienced when I returned to Japan kept haunting me for a long time, so I decided to go study abroad for a year in Germany to figure out the complex feelings that I could not comprehend. Eventually, I quit TMCIT and pursued an IB bilingual diploma at the International School Frankfurt Rhein-Main. Now, I am majoring in cultural anthropology (and minoring in museum studies).

#### My interests

In the field of cultural anthropology, there is a concept called “liminality,” which refers to the existence that is in between one category and another (e.g., fetus, “*ha-fu*,” refugees). As a person raised in several different countries and exposed to different cultural, legal, and political standards, I am interested in exploring the vulnerability of this world by looking into liminal existences. More specifically, I am interested in how people often comprehend invisible and unstable realities such as memories of ‘tragedy’ and what can be done to create a community that allows people to perform their meanings of lives in this vulnerable precarious environment.

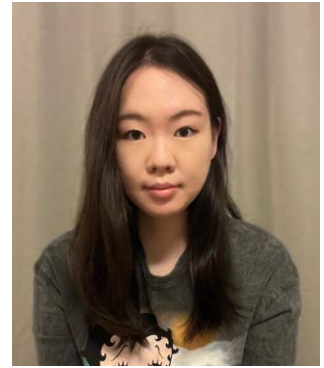
#### Why Okayama University?

Okayama University attracts students from all over the world. Since I was looking for a university in Japan that highly values IB diplomas and offers an interdisciplinary, international program, the Discovery Program for Global Learners at Okayama University was my first choice. After studying here for around three years, I am very satisfied with the environment because many opportunities are available to students if they are interested. Thanks to these opportunities, currently, I am studying in the Kobe-Osaka U.S. Embassy-sponsored program to deepen my understanding of U.S.-Japan relations and running an English student journal called “*Polyphony*” with other international students.

What I learned in my IB education is proving helpful for my current studies, and Okayama University is definitely the place where you can further build up your knowledge and skills!

### IB STUDENT LIFE

**Student Name:** Minkyung Jeong



My name is Minkyung Jeong, a third-year GDP student and part of the Matching Track (MT) in the Department of Biology, Faculty of Science. I was born in South Korea and raised in Japan. I attended an International School in Tokyo for six years, where I initially gained a cross-cultural understanding.

As I wanted to continue my experience in a multicultural environment and aspired to study various areas, I decided to join GDP at Okayama University. As a foreigner with limited Japanese proficiency, the first two years of education in the MT course were quite challenging. Though no matter how difficult it was, the well-structured GDP system with very supportive professors has eased the difficulties and has made my new adventure enjoyable. This new chapter of my life has made me acquire a wide range of knowledge in my study areas and the significance of acknowledging flaws and seeking others' advice.

Moreover, GDP allows me to explore different interests and interact better with an international community. By taking various courses, I have discovered new passions and gained confidence in my decision-making abilities. Without the opportunities offered by this program, I would not have been able to strengthen my active learning and academic skills to this extent. Also, I have broadened my perspectives by forming meaningful connections with diverse people from different backgrounds. These experiences have led me to improve myself by critically analyzing my strengths and limitations.

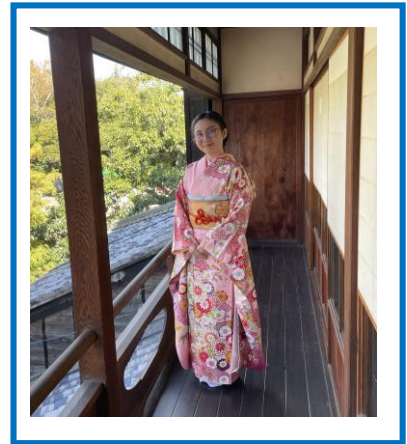
Watching GDP influence the students greatly, I wanted to enhance this reciprocal interaction. Therefore, I decided to join a GDP public relations internship to hone the skills I gained through a series of activities over the past few years. Thankfully, I have been given unique opportunities to participate in making a poster for "My Hashi Campaign," taking place at the SDGs Future Conference and to create presentations, brochures, and online magazines to introduce GDP. I am delighted to be a member who can strengthen the GDP community. Indeed, there is a great deal of responsibility and burden; however, this worthwhile experience has allowed me to gain practical abilities and transform the anxiety into a positive form of stress through my achievements.

In this way, GDP has the flexibility to allow students to freely experience various activities and their interests. I look forward to seeing more IB students in GDP so that they can bring their multicultural richness and enrich a program where diversity is already valued. Imagine yourself studying in a place with different norms and customs like GDP. In this highly multicultural environment, you can explore new prospects with intellectual and inspiring friends and faculty members.



### IB STUDENT LIFE

Student Name: Mone Ohara



#### • Self Introduction

Hi everyone! My name is Mone Ohara. I am currently in my third year studying at the Discovery Program for Global Learners. My major is sociology, and more specifically, I am interested in digging deep into the field of gender concerning various fashion styles adopted by people. I grew up mainly in Hiroshima but lived in the United States for three years because of my parent's work. I like to read mystery novels during my free time, and I would love to hear any recommendations, either in Japanese or English!

#### • Why study at GDP?

It is wonderful that GDP is a stimulating environment where everyone is enthusiastic about their interests. I also thought even though being in Japan; I could get a "real" sense of what it is like to study in a multinational and multicultural environment which I think is a unique experience that I can't get elsewhere. In addition, GDP allows students to study subjects from different areas. This enabled me to dissect gender, my topic of interest, from a multifaceted perspective.

#### • Life at Okayama University

Becoming part of GDP began a new chapter in my life. Everything was fresh and full of challenges. Since I belong to the Cultural Diversity and Communities cluster in the Discovery Track, where most of the courses I take are offered in English, in my first year, it was tough for me to understand the content of the assigned reading and prepare for discussion. However, now that I have been in GDP for three years, I have gained my study method in keeping up with the readings and discussions. In addition, during my first year in GDP, almost all classes were offered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus I couldn't meet with my classmates face to face, resulting in less connection and communication within the GDP community. However, the gradual shift from online classes to in-person classes enabled me to finally meet with my friends whom I had only seen online. One of the most powerful teachings that I have gained so far in GDP is that cross-cultural understanding (異文化理解) isn't that easy, and there is more beyond what we perceive as such a seemingly simple term. GDP is indeed a melting pot consisting of people from different countries, regions, ethnicity, gender, etc., and I learn something new every day about the different cultures both within the class as well as interacting with my friends from diverse backgrounds.

#### • My Future Vision and Goals

I have not fully decided on my career path yet, but I envision myself working in a diverse environment like GDP. Keeping in mind the IB learner profile, I would like to make the rest of my university life as fulfilling as possible through interacting and learning from the productive environment I am in now.