

The English College in Prague
Graduation Ceremony Speech 2025 - student representative

Good evening teachers, parents and of course, my fellow graduates,

‘Disclaimer because I know someone is going to say it: no Chatgpt was involved in the writing of this speech, these words are from the heart’

For the past two years especially, we’ve been sort of entrapped in this (mental) bubble that has made it feel like all there is to life is IAs, EEs, CAS hours, grades, deadlines and all the other joys of the IB. And I think it is really easy to let these things, the grades that are merely just numbers, cloud our ECP experience, dictate our value and lead us to overlook the fact none of these things actually matter when you zoom-out of the bubble. And because this is all we’ve known in recent years, now that all of it is over and we have finished our final exams, it is kind of difficult to not have an existential crisis and not know what to do with ourselves.

But I want to remind everyone that someday we’ll laugh about the amount of value we placed onto this, the tears we lost, the sleep we sacrificed, the caffeine we consumed. I mean you know it’s bad when everyone starts drinking the 25kc coffee from Zabka. Or maybe you didn’t place a lot of value... Either way, the legacy we leave behind is not going to be the amount of IB points we got. We will remember each other through the relationships we made, the memories, the times we laughed, the kind of person we were and the mark we left on people; that is our legacy.

But of course, I’m not going to stand here and pretend that everyone is friends with everyone, that we all love each other at all times because that’s never the case. People always naturally migrate into their own groups and growing up is full of arguments, falling out with people, breakups. But at the end of the day, we have all spent our most formative years with each other, for some all the way from 12/13 to 18/19/20 years old. I mean 6 years is a long time seeing the same faces everyday no offense guys, not that I don’t love you. We have witnessed each other go through a plethora of phases, such as the regrettable emo eras, where some, (including me) wore ripped tights and black eyeliner to school everyday, or the Hypebeast phases where no matter the outfit, as long as the label supreme or off white was visible, it was ‘drip’.

Look around you, I mean we have some very impressive students among us. A few months before the exams I was chatting to Simon, Dan and Jenik and they told me that they think they'll be able to achieve the maximum score of 45 IB points... .if they add up all 3 of their scores together. But hey isn't that what the IB is all about? Collaboration...Community?

I think the one comforting aspect of the past 2 years was actually the sense of community, knowing that we were all in the same boat....sinking....together. Yeah one thing we really loved to do is feed off of each other's procrastination. There's nothing quite like walking into class on Monday morning after you know you missed another Sunday 10pm deadline and the first thing you hear is "hej kamo v pohode ja to taky nesubmitnul". Or when you're working on something last minute at 1 am, thinking that you are alone whilst everyone else is sleeping, but then the little google icon (profile) pops up on the document. And suddenly you're not alone. Someone else is suffering right there with you.

That brings me onto thanking our teachers who have endured this journey with us. It's important to remember that it can't have been easy for them either. Some of them still had to mark EEs that were due in August/November....in April. No but genuinely, there are so many warm, dedicated teachers in the school who genuinely care about us and want us to do our best. (I think that is definitely something that sets ECP apart from other schools). I personally felt that a lot during these exams, where some teachers would just drop whatever they were doing just to ask us how we felt, to congratulate us on our hard work and offer encouragement. So thank you for that.

Another time that comes to mind where there was a strong feeling of community was during our exams, especially in the prison room. For context to those who don't know what I am talking about, I am not being metaphorical when I say "prison" by the way. It was actually called the prison room. Nothing boosts morale quite like finishing a brutal exam, hoping that you did ok you know, but hey at least it's over right, you never have to do that subject again, you open the door like a bird waiting to be set free and there stands Mr. Hudson, ready to burst your bubble of euphoria and ordering you to go to "prison" immediately. But on a serious note, shoutout to Mr. Hudson, thank you for being a great IB coordinator and helping these past stressful weeks sail smoothly.

I would also like to dedicate a big thank you to Ms. Reardon, Mr. Hill and Ms. Smith for helping us all navigate our university choices and application processes. I'm pretty sure Mr. Hill has not had a single moment of peace during his breaks this year, always being harassed by us asking university questions, wherever and whenever we could find him. The two times I went to visit him myself in his office, I interrupted him just trying to eat his porridge, so we're sorry but we're very grateful for all of your guys' help. Thank you

Additionally, we thank Mr. Paterson for having to create elaborate ways in which students could get some last minute CAS hours, our tutors (Mr. Foster, Dr. Athwal, Mr. Cossins and Ms. Biro) who tried their best to support us and remain patient whilst simultaneously sending like 10 missed deadline emails every week and our Headmaster, Dr. Brown, who is the complete opposite of what one thinks is a stereotypically strict headmaster, (my mind always goes to the angry and strict Mrs. Trunchbull from Roald Dahl's Matilda.) Dr. Brown is genuinely always so nice, always smiling and greeting everyone in the corridor while also handling all the difficulties that occur in the background, especially during the past 2 years during our move to Elektra.

All have a role in making us feel welcome...

Lastly and most importantly, thank you to our parents, who have played the biggest role in our upbringing.....

So regardless, if you have shed blood sweat and tears during the last 2 years and tried your best, or maybe you didn't try your best, maybe you didn't get the best IB score you could have and spent your time on reels instead but that's ok. I think everyone should be proud of themselves to some extent because we did it.

Karla Byrne, Year 6