

## Professor Ngo Bao Chau: I Used to Feel Unhappy Failing Exams

On April 4th, Prof. Ngo Bao Chau, Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Mathematics, and Prof. Nguyen Huu Du, Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Mathematics visited Duy Tan University (DTU) to exchange with and answer many questions from DTU lecturers and students.



*Professor Chau signs autographs*

A student asked Professor Chau, *“Which method is best for thoroughly studying Mathematics?”*

The Professor said there was no particular method that suits everyone; each student has their own way of learning. Some learn Mathematics easily and others learn it because they find it difficult and challenging.

*“When I failed my Math exam, I found the subject very difficult and my self-esteem was hurt,”* Prof. Chau explained. *“Faced with that challenge, I started to like Math and from then on resolved to study it more enthusiastically.”*

He also noted that mathematics, like anything else in life, can often be done alone but that we sometimes need the help of others to discover the correct solution and succeed.

Another student was concerned that, *“At high school we learn geometry and equations and so on and at university we study more and more. But when we graduate, we are never able to apply that knowledge in our work or lives. Should the theoretical load be reduced or removed? Shouldn’t we learn only the Math that applies to practical applications relevant in our majors and future jobs?”*

The Professor admitted that this issue was a huge dilemma for him and said that he couldn’t decide whether such majors should be continued or dropped.

*“Deciding at the beginning of university what to study, based on expectations after graduation, is not the right way to see things,” Prof. Chau explained. “Society is always in flux, so you have to study for tomorrow, not just for today. You should always be prepared for the changes that tomorrow will bring. The main purpose of a university education is to prepare us to adapt to all of life’s possibilities.”*

Prof. Nguyen Huu Du, Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Mathematics, explained that Mathematics is very highly respected in Vietnam, especially since Prof. Chau won the Fields Medal.

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam ranks first in Mathematics, having overtaken Singapore. In the whole of Asia it is on a par with South Korea. It is also the only discipline in Vietnam that meets international expectations.

*(Media Center)*