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UCC Graduation Pathways

IB DP SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PATHWAY AND SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION: INNOVATION FOR A BETTER WORLD COURSE | FAQ

Below are frequently asked questions regarding the new IB Diploma Programme (IB DP) Systems Transformation Pathway and the Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course.

SECTION 1. THE IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION PATHWAY: OVERVIEW

1.a. Why is UCC introducing a new IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway and a new course called Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World?

UCC is a committed IB Continuum World School and we are evolving our program to best meet the needs of our students. The new UCC Graduation Pathways, including the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway, are being introduced to enhance student options in Years 11 and 12. The pathways will expand the breadth and depth of opportunities available to students so that they can find and pursue their passions at UCC and beyond.

UCC is one of four schools around the world that are working closely with the IB to develop the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway, a unique new learning opportunity and graduation pathway. As a trusted school partner, it builds on UCC's long-standing relationship with the IB and our expertise in writing curriculum, delivering workshops and producing example work.

The key feature of the new IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway is the Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course. In this project-based, experiential course, students will develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to solve the most complex, systemic problems of their time. The course will count as two of a student's six subjects (in addition to the DP Core course) on this pathway, which allows some specialization in Systems Transformation. This course is unique to UCC and builds on the strengths of and continuum of learning — providing a culminating experience for our signature program in design thinking and digital innovation — and allowing students to delve into wellbeing, pluralism and sustainability and extend the learning that they've had prior to Year 11.

The IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway offers some flexibility in the selection of a student's other courses, so that students can tailor their course complement to their interests and passions.

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1.b. What are some of the key features of the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway?

This graduation pathway will provide a strong IB liberal education for students who want to focus on innovation for a better world. Graduates earn both the IB Diploma and the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

This pathway includes the new Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course (which represents two SL course credits) and more flexible IB DP course selection options across the other subject groups, alongside the IB DP Core course (Theory of Knowledge; Extended Essay; Creativity, Activity, Service). It encourages students to think and act differently as leaders and citizens.

Through their experience in the Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course, students in this pathway will graduate with knowledge of the major social, environmental and economic challenges of our time as well as the technical skills and the confidence to build, test and iterate a prototype solution aimed at solving some aspect of those issues.

This pathway remains grounded in the IB DP's core ethos, reflecting breadth, academic rigour and international mindedness.

1.c. How has the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway been developed?

UCC is one of four schools globally that have been approved by the IB to offer a new IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway for selected students. UCC will begin to offer this pathway in September 2025. It builds on UCC's strengths and our continuum of programming at the school — providing a culminating experience for our signature program in design thinking and digital innovation — and allowing students to delve into wellbeing, pluralism and sustainability and extend the learning that they've had prior to Year 11. The Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course has been developed by a UCC team of experienced academic leaders and teachers with expertise across the sciences, design and humanities in partnership with the IB.

1.d. Will this replace the existing IB Diploma?

No. The IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway is a graduation pathway option offered alongside the IB DP Pathway and IB DP Courses Pathway. The IB is committed to adding more flexibility to its Diploma Programme and to that end has embarked on a multi-year review, involving a number of innovative projects, and a great deal of research. The aim is to expand the options currently available to better meet the different needs of IB students around the world.

Graduates of the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway will earn both the IB Diploma and the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

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1.e. When will the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway be available to UCC students?

Starting in September 2025, UCC students (Leaving Class of 2027 and beyond) will have the opportunity to pursue this pathway. During fall, Year 10 students will learn details of the different UCC graduation pathways as they move towards making their course selections.

Students must apply to participate in this pathway. (See details in Section 3 below.)

1.f. How does this fit with the IB's ongoing global review of its 16+ programming?

Inspired by the evolving education landscape and needs of learners, the IB is conducting a comprehensive, multi-year, community-driven, collaborative review of its programmes aimed at students aged 16 and over. The goal is to launch innovations in 2030 that make the “programmes, subjects, and assessments more flexible, future-oriented, and responsive to school and student contexts by placing choice, wellbeing, and real-world relevance at their core.”

As an IB Continuum World School, UCC has a significant interest in the outcome of this review. We are in active partnership with the IB to learn more about the review and contribute to it in substantive ways that can help shape the outcome. The new IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway at UCC is one of only four approved worldwide contributing to the IB's 16+ review.

SECTION 2. CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

2.a. How is the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway different from the existing IB Diploma Programme Pathway?

The IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway includes the new Innovations for a Better World course as a cornerstone of a student's experience on this pathway, covering the equivalent of two SL courses. The course will help students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to solve the most complex, systemic problems of their time, making the world a better place. Students will experience first-hand what it means to develop a real solution to a real-world problem.





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Envisioned as a bold and innovative pathway, there are some key differences between the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway and course and the other two graduation pathways:

1. UCC is one of four schools in the world invited by the IB to develop and run this pathway and develop a new and engaging course. A cohort of up to 24 students will be accepted and begin this pathway in September 2025.
2. The Systems Transformation course represents two standard level (SL) subjects and will be awarded two identical grades towards their overall total of 45 points.
3. Selecting the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway opens up greater flexibility in the other course options for Year 11 and 12 students.
4. The IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway is designed for students seeking to take action, show initiative and make change. In offering students a transdisciplinary, project-based learning experience, and a progressive, authentic assessment model, the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway offers a different kind of challenge for our students.

2.b. What does learning look like in this graduation pathway and course?

The Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World course will apply design and systems thinking tools and methodologies to complex, transdisciplinary subjects related to individual, collective, societal and planetary wellbeing and belonging. In the course, students will focus on pluralism, sustainability and wellbeing.

The course will cover the equivalent of two SL courses and will increase flexibility among other subject groups for students to select courses based on their passions.

Students in the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway are required to select three HL subjects and one SL subject to study alongside the Systems Transformation course and the DP Core course (Theory of Knowledge; Extended Essay; Creativity, Activity, Service). To ensure that a reasonable breadth of study is maintained, the IB mandates that this selection must include the following:

- At least one course from the studies in language and literature (Group 1) or language acquisition (Group 2) subject groups; no more than two subjects across the language and literature and language acquisition subject groups
- At least one course from the sciences (Group 4) or mathematics (Group 5) subject groups
- A maximum of two courses from any subject group

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2.c. What is UCC's new DP Core course and how does it relate to the three Graduation Pathways?

Starting in 2024–25, UCC has structured the IB DP Core components (Theory of Knowledge; Extended Essay; Creativity, Activity, Service) – into a single course. This approach supports scheduling and reinforces the complementary nature of these three components to foster in students an awareness of themselves, others, and the world. DP Core centers students' own experiences and their position and impact on their various communities, challenging them to explore “Who am I and who are we?”. This course achieves this through four common aims:

- to foster other-mindedness and encourage students to become responsible and actively involved global citizens
- to develop students' self-awareness and sense of identity, and provide an opportunity for reflection on their development of the attributes of the IB learner profile
- to encourage students to be flexible thinkers and doers, who overcome challenges both independently and collaboratively, and who can see connections between disparate things
- to enrich and add value to students' overall learning experiences—supporting, and being supported by, their academic studies in the rest of the programme

All three graduation pathways include the IB DP Core course, providing a common experience for all our Year 11 and 12 students that broadens their education and challenges them to apply their knowledge and skills with a focus on themes including leadership, ethics, empathy, collaboration, and metacognition.

In Theory of Knowledge (TOK), students reflect on the nature of knowledge and on how we know what we claim to know. The Extended Essay (EE) is an independent, self-directed piece of research, culminating with a 4,000-word paper. In Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), students participate in a range of experiences and at least one real-world, meaningful project.

The DP Core course is about each individual student and how they know. TOK teaches that explicitly, CAS teaches it through experience, and the EE is a manifestation of that knowledge and passion. The course encourages students to see how they are connected to the systems around them, including how they are shaped by them, and how they can shape them.

UCC's DP Core course has been designed to complement all three graduation pathways, and in particular it extends some of the benefits of the new IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway to all our Year 11 and 12 students.

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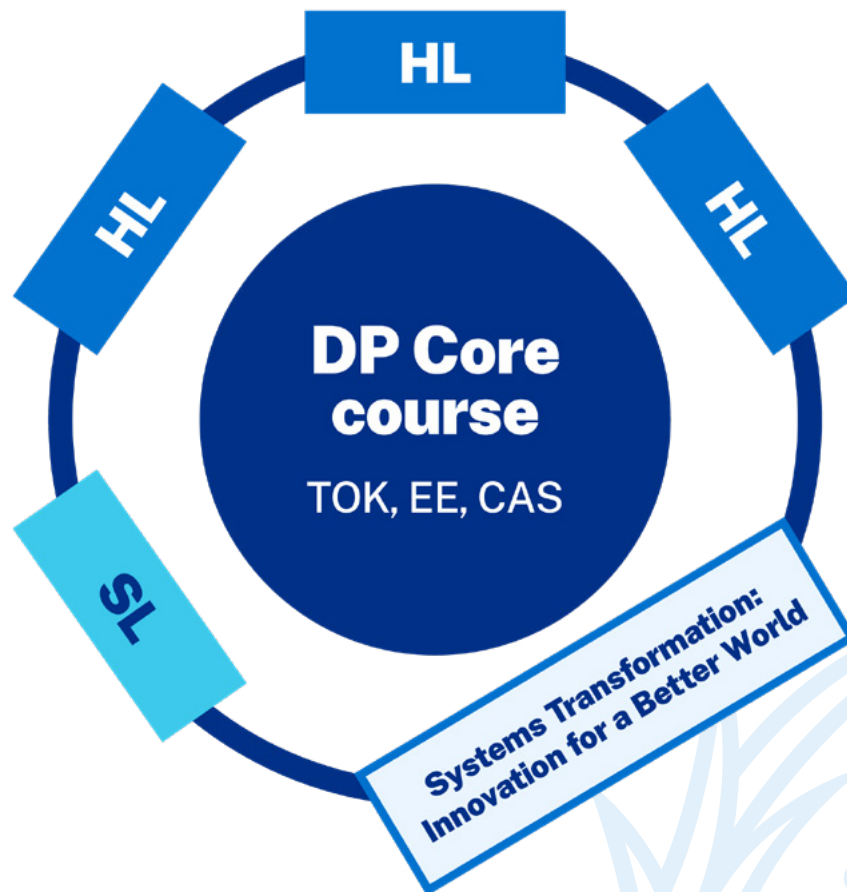
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For example, DP Core includes a focus on other-mindedness, notions of stakeholder and interrelationships in systems, which is foundational to systems thinking and design thinking. Furthermore, DP Core explores the impact of technology on knowledge and the ethical uses of current and emerging technologies. With clear links to the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway, these areas of study are applicable across all three graduation pathways.

Students from all three graduation pathways will be mixed into the DP Core course sections so that students have the opportunity to engage with students in other pathways, as they do in other shared courses.



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2.d. How will students be assessed?

This course has been developed as an alternative assessment pathway for the IB. This means that, while Systems Transformation students will be graded using the same 1-7 system and work towards the same IB Diploma qualification, they won't be assessed through traditional exam models. Instead, assessments on this course will include comparative case studies, a portfolio, systems mapping, and an individual engagement project.

Two of the four tasks (a case study and a project proposal) are internally assessed and externally moderated by the IB. The other two tasks (an impact analysis and a curated extract from a competencies portfolio) are externally assessed by the IB.

This 300-hour course is a dual award course that takes the place of two 150-hour SL subjects. The course is graded on the same 1-7 scale as other IB subjects, and the student is awarded two identical grades based on their performance across the systems transformation course as a whole.

Assessment is designed to be:

- **Balanced:** The assessment model distributes formal assessment components over the two years of the course and is project-based rather than culminating in a final examination at the end of the course. Students will demonstrate skills and transdisciplinary understanding through a process portfolio, written reports, a case study, and a systems mapping task. Fifty per cent is assessed externally by IB examiners; 50 per cent is assessed by UCC teachers, and moderated by the IB.
- **Authentic:** Teacher-led projects, and the individual engagement project, will tackle pressing, real-world issues, with students designing interventions or artefacts for authentic audiences. This could include community partners, external experts, UCC alumni, or service providers.
- **Iterative:** Ongoing, formative assessment, including peer review and targeted self-reflection, is a key feature of the project-based approach on this course. Students will revisit, re-evaluate, and refine their approach, in an ongoing manner.

2.e. Will a 7 in this subject be more difficult to achieve than a 7 in a separate SL subject?

No. The level of difficulty in this (dual award) course — to achieve a 7 or any other grade overall — will be no more difficult than in other (single) subjects. Assessment objectives and marking criteria have been co-written with the IB to ensure consistency and appropriate challenge. Grade boundaries are set by the IB's principal examiner for the subject and there are established processes (e.g. pairs analysis) whereby the IB considers performance across subjects to ensure comparable levels of difficulty. Though in this case two identical grades will be awarded by the IB; the level of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to reach a 7 will be the same as in a single grade course.

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2.f. Are there final written externally assessed exams?

Yes. The majority of IB courses include a final written exam at the end of the programme. These exams are set and assessed externally by the IB.

The Systems Transformation course does not include a final exam but rather project-based assessments (two are internally assessed by UCC and two are externally assessed by the IB).

SECTION 3. STUDENT SUITABILITY AND PATHWAY APPLICATIONS

3.a. Who is this pathway for?

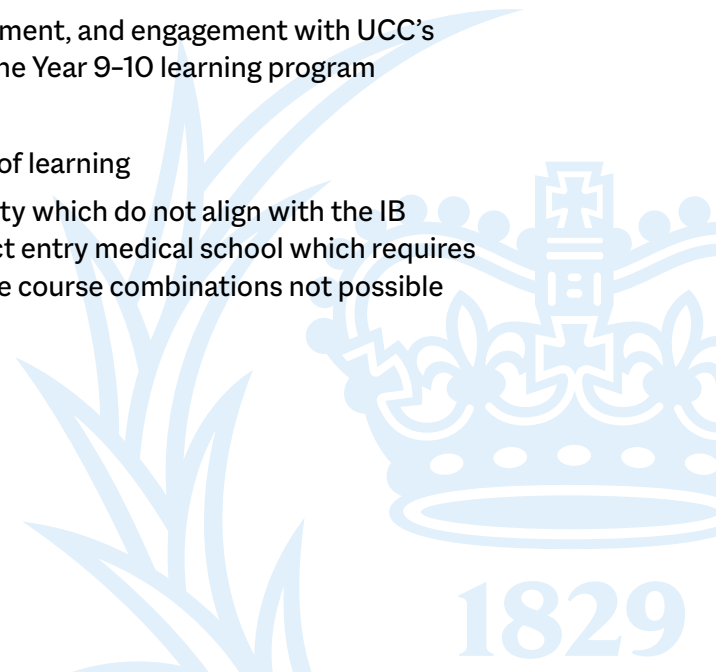
This pathway may be suited to students interested in an experiential, project-based approach and learning that focuses on wellbeing, pluralism and sustainability as contexts, with a focus on understanding and investigating solutions to real-world problems and positively impacting their local and global community.

This course may be for students who:

- are committed to enacting UCC's mission and values looking for opportunities to initiate change and develop leadership skills
- are looking to balance and broaden their assessment experiences
- enjoy collaborative, real-world focused learning, tackling authentic problems
- are taking the full IB Diploma
- want more flexibility in their subject options, beyond the traditional IB Diploma requirements

This course may not be for students who:

- have not demonstrated secure Approaches to Learning (ATLs) in Years 9-10
- are not able to demonstrate initiative, commitment, and engagement with UCC's mission and values from their experiences in the Year 9-10 learning program
- are looking for an "easier" diploma option
- prefer more traditional, exam-focused modes of learning
- have specific course requirements for university which do not align with the IB Diploma model as a whole (such as some direct entry medical school which requires three HL sciences), and/or who want to pursue course combinations not possible within this model





3. b. What could this course look like in an IB Diploma package?

Example IB Diploma Packages:

A	B	C	D	E
Students can still take two sciences and a maths course	Students can still select two humanities subjects from Group 3:	Students can take two arts subjects from Group 6:	Students are now able to take two science courses and an arts subject:	Students are still able to study for a bilingual IB diploma by selecting two language A courses:
HL Physics HL Chemistry HL Math AA	HL English A HL Math A HL Global Politics	HL English A HL Music HL Film	HL Music HL Chemistry HL English A	HL Spanish A HL History HL Sport Exercise and Health Science
SL English A	SL Economics	SL Math AA	SL Biology	SL English A
Systems Transformation: Innovation for a Better World				

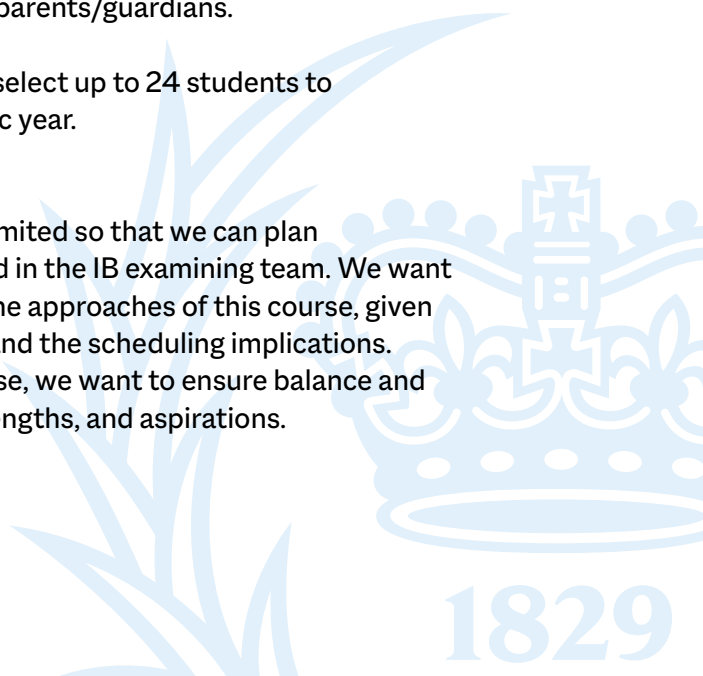
3.c. How can a student enter the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway?

Students must submit an application outlining their interest in the pathway. Specific elements of the application will be noted at our information sessions. Applications require sign-off from UCC’s University Counselling Office and parents/guardians.

A selection committee will review all applications and select up to 24 students to participate in this programme in the 2025–26 academic year.

3.d. Why will only 24 students be selected?

We are intentionally keeping the number of students limited so that we can plan appropriately for staffing — both within the College and in the IB examining team. We want to ensure that students are suited and committed to the approaches of this course, given the time commitment (equivalent to two SL courses) and the scheduling implications. Additionally, given the collaborative nature of the course, we want to ensure balance and diversity in the course intake, in terms of interests, strengths, and aspirations.





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3.e. When do students need to decide if they want to follow this pathway?

In the fall, Year 10 students will have many opportunities to explore the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway and other graduation pathways.

Year 10 students must apply for admission to the IB DP System Transformation Pathway by the end of January. Decisions will be confirmed in late February/early March.

3.f. Are there additional information sessions or meetings for Year 10 students?

The UCO holds annual information evenings where families can view a presentation and participate in a Q-and-A session. These meetings are announced in advance via Heads Up.

In 2025, sessions were held on October 30 and December 1. Please click below to view the presentation slides and watch the meeting recordings.

October: [Slides](#) | [Recording](#)

December: [Slides](#) | [Recording](#)

3.g. When will Year 10 students meet with their counsellor to select their options?

Individual meetings for Year 10 students take place throughout January. The UCO team will email each student directly with instructions on how to book a dedicated time slot with their counsellor.

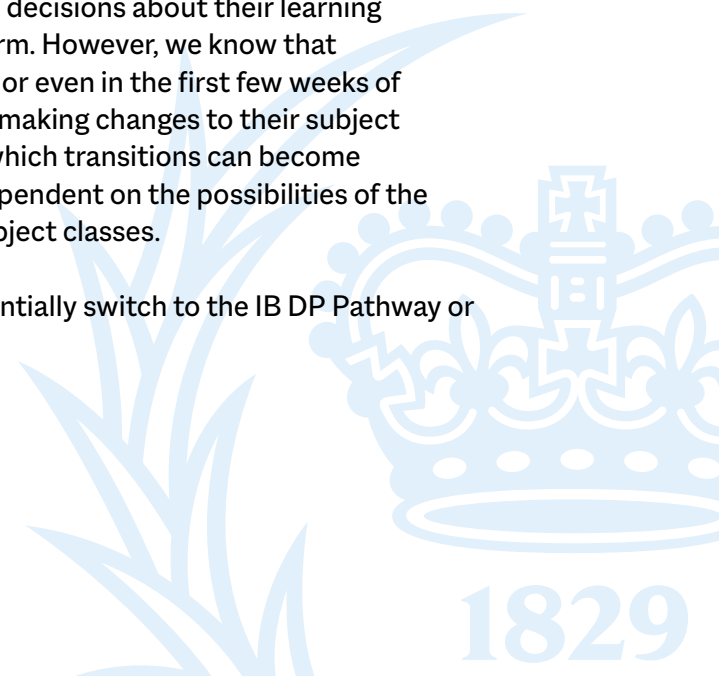
3.h. How will students be selected for this course/pathway?

The selection criteria for this pathway will be focused on demonstration of interest in the subject matter and nature of learning of the course as well as demonstration of key IB Learner Profile attributes that will support success. Additionally, students must demonstrate alignment with their postsecondary goals and plans.

3.i. What if students change their minds?

Our aim is that all students are able to make informed decisions about their learning programme when they submit their subject option form. However, we know that sometimes thinking shifts in the subsequent months, or even in the first few weeks of a new course: for this reason, we support students in making changes to their subject package up until the Thanksgiving Weekend — after which transitions can become much more challenging. These changes are always dependent on the possibilities of the timetable, and on space being available in the new subject classes.

An IB DP Systems Transformation student could potentially switch to the IB DP Pathway or the IB DP Courses Pathway.





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3.j. May students take the Systems Transformation course if they're not participating in the Systems Transformation Pathway?

The course is only available to students taking the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway; however, some elements of the course will be made available to other UCC students through some subject areas, co-curricular activities and other opportunities.

SECTION 4. UNIVERSITY RECOGNITION

4.a. Do universities recognize Systems Transformation?

Diploma students opting to take the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway will receive the same IB qualifications and an overall score out of 45 points, which is well understood by universities in a wide range of countries and systems (see more at the [IB University Recognition website](#)). Graduates of this pathway will earn both the IB Diploma and the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSDD).

UCC, the IB and the three other IB schools offering the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway are engaging with universities to share our work and ensure that they understand the content and rigour of this new option. Both the ability to dive deeply into an area of particular interest and the opportunity to develop skills as part of a real-world engagement have been highlighted as valuable opportunities afforded by the course.

UCC is an academically strong school — committed to its renowned delivery of the IB programmes, which are recognized by universities as the gold standard in university preparation.

The IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway provides an exceptionally strong foundation for university studies. It remains grounded in the Diploma Programme's core ethos, reflecting breadth, academic rigour and international mindedness. Because of the skills that graduates acquire, graduates of the IB DP Systems Transformation Pathway may be appealing to many target university programs that align with the ethos of the Systems Transformation course.

4.b. How can students get advice on whether this course suits their university goals?

In the fall, students and families will have multiple opportunities to explore the new Graduation Pathways and how the three options are suited to students' preferred university destinations.

UCC will hold information sessions and University Counselling meetings regarding the pathway options for Year 10 students. Year 10 students will have one-to-one meetings with their university counsellors to discuss their university plans and the pathway options suited to their plans and interests. Information is also available on UCC's website.

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We encourage students to make their initial subject selections for Year 11 by reflecting on their interests and strengths, the kinds of learning they enjoy, and the experiences they want to have in their learning program as a whole.

4.c. What if students don't know what they want to study at university? How can they make a decision about this course?

We don't expect all Year 10 students to have a fully formed idea as to what they want to do after school. One of the strengths of the IB DP is its breadth and much of that is maintained in this new option, which will still require students to choose (in addition to Systems Transformation) three higher level (HL) subjects and one standard level (SL) subject from across a range of subject groups.

As well as broadening students' knowledge and skills, the IB model allows for flexibility and students' developing curiosity, leaving many options open for future study. Students should be guided by their strengths and interests in making subject choices and should consider requirements of universities where they might want to apply.

In the case that a student doesn't know what they want to study at university then the IB DP Pathway is likely the more suitable and should be part of their discussions with their university counsellor.

UCC Graduation Pathways | Additional Resources

FAQ | [IB DP Pathway](#)

FAQ | [IB DP Courses Pathway](#)

