

DP - So Many Opportunities, so How Do I Choose?

Article contributed by Ms. Katherine Ross, Secondary Deputy Principal (Academics)



In my role as Deputy Principal, overseeing Academics in the Secondary, the time between January and May is an exciting and busy part of the school year. It is the time where our thinking starts to shift to the next school year, to the bright future for all of our students. We get to celebrate with our Y12s as they enter this last stage of secondary school, cheer as they get their university acceptances, elbow bump as they leave their last mock exam or IOC, and whoop with joy on the final exam day in May. We witness the last vestiges of their childhood as they start to shift into the adults they will become. Having graduated from the IB DP myself, I can attest to how important the programme (and getting through those crucial two years) is to who I am today.

For our current Y10s, the DP course selection process is an important milestone, that first big step towards adulthood, university and their future careers. It is an important decision that can profoundly affect their overall secondary school experience. It is not a decision to be taken lightly, which is why it actually begins way back in Y6. Through our new FLEX program, directed by our UCO team, students have the opportunity to build awareness of their personal strengths and interests, explore career opportunities based on these characteristics and investigate university pathways around the world. They set goals for their academic achievement and adjust as they mature and develop as individuals and learners. We want our students to know as much about themselves as possible, so they can better navigate the DP course selection process, and recognise their ability to shape their futures.

How many of you truly knew what you wanted to do as a career when you were 15 or 16 years old? There are usually two camps of students; those that are absolutely, 100% positive they know what they want to do and have known since kindergarten and those that have no idea at all what they want to study. There are definite flaws in both of these mindsets. For students who have fixed on a pathway, they are not accounting for change, both in themselves and the world around them. Not everyone is destined to be a doctor, lawyer or engineer, especially considering there are thousands of new career opportunities being created every year that might suit them better. Students who don't think they know



what to study are also not seeing the full picture; they have been actually telling us throughout the MYP what they want to do, just not in the most obvious way. They tell us in their MYP results and which homework assignments always get done, which classes they try not to miss, etc.

The best advice I received from my university counsellor way back in the day is still the one I tell all of my students. Choose DP subjects based on your strengths and passions, not based on what you think you should do. The two year programme can be a long slog and it is so much worse if you are in courses that don't inspire you (to think, to work hard, to excel). In most cases, university programs are focused on your overall point score, not individual subject choices (unless it is for a specialised programme). It is much easier to do well in a course that you enjoy or that pushes you in different ways, so don't dismiss the value of a Group 6 course in supporting your pathway to university. For me, taking Music SL was one of the best decisions I ever made, helping me to achieve a 40+ score in the DP as it was my way to deal with stress and gave me a creative outlet within the school day. The Diploma Programme is stressful enough without being stuck in courses that you don't enjoy or are too hard or too easy. This just zaps your energy and confidence, making the two years more of an uphill battle than it needs to be.

For our current Y10s, the next few months are a crucial time, but they have a large support system here to help make their decisions. This includes their teachers, UCO team, SLT and, of course, their families. We wish them all the best and can't wait to celebrate these big milestones in their path to adulthood!