

Systems transformation: Leadership for just and sustainable futures

Pilot collaboration with Mulgrave: The International School of Vancouver
First assessment 2027

The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

Normally, three subjects are taken at higher level (HL) and three subjects are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL. In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

For this pilot, students take three higher level (HL) subjects, one standard level (SL) subject, and the three core elements. In place of the other two standard level subjects, they complete a 300-hour project-based systems transformation course.



I. Course description

Systems transformation: Leadership for just and sustainable futures is an innovative 300-hour pilot course co-developed by the IB and Mulgrave: The International School of Vancouver. Recognizing that societal systems are in need of fundamental changes, this transdisciplinary and experiential course aims to empower students with a greater understanding of systems complexity, a greater appreciation for indigenous 7th-generation thinking, and the knowledge, perspectives and skills needed to approach systems level change in their futures.

Experiential learning is a key part of the approach to this course. In addition to formal extended projects, students engage in a variety of immersive learning experiences and community engagement activities. They also have opportunities to collaborate with a variety of regional and international partners and experts to deepen their learning.

The course also places a great deal of emphasis on building the competencies that students need in order to address complex systemic challenges. Throughout the course, students develop and maintain an impact portfolio that incorporates sample work, self-reflection, teacher feedback, and intervention planning – a process intended to develop students' resilience and responsiveness to feedback.

A third key focus of this course is engaging students with different perspectives and different methodologies. It seeks to foster a nuanced understanding of different perspectives on problems and of different approaches to problem-solving. Reflecting the context of the school, there is a particular focus on engaging with local First Nations epistemologies and ontologies, with particular emphasis on 7th-generation thinking and approaches.

II. Course aims

The aims of the Systems transformation: Leadership for just and sustainable futures course are to:

- introduce systems thinking as a primary methodological approach to addressing complex issues
- provide students with a set of actionable skills and content knowledge to understand and address complex issues
- centre the role of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies in imagining just and sustainable futures
- assist in building the competencies necessary for students to develop ethical and sustainable interventions at a systems level
- develop, through experiential learning, student resilience, empathy, and a heightened capacity for radical imagination
- utilize design thinking processes to develop novel and sustainable interventions to complex problems.

III. Subject requirements

For this pilot, students are required to select three HL subjects and one SL subject to study alongside the systems transformation course and the three core elements. To ensure that a reasonable breadth of study is maintained, this selection must include:

- At least one subject from the studies in language and literature or language acquisition subject groups
- No more than two subjects across the language and literature and language acquisition subject groups
- At least one subject from the sciences or mathematics subject groups
- A maximum of two subjects from any subject group

IV. Curriculum overview

Syllabus component	Teaching hours
<p>Core Curriculum</p> <p>The core curriculum addresses topics and skills that are transdisciplinary and key for understanding how complex systems evolve and can be transformed. The core curriculum represents the foundational knowledge and understanding intended to inform all aspects of the course. It is focused on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constructing and deconstructing narratives• Theories and practices of power• Ethics and ontologies• Complex adaptive systems• Designing for ecopreneurship• Data processing and analysis	100
<p>Inspirations</p> <p>Throughout the course, students will have the opportunity to interact with relevant external partners as a means of expanding and challenging their perspectives. This component will provide space for community presentations, guest speakers, and workshops intended to give students opportunities for connection and reflection in their impact portfolios.</p>	20



<p>Inquiry into Impact Areas</p> <p>At specific junctures of the course, students will participate in a series of immersive learning experiences, through which specific impact areas are identified and explored. This element involves the bridging of theory and practice: the curated immersions allow students to develop their understanding of impact areas theoretically and experientially. Examples of impact areas include energy, health, biodiversity, land use, tourism, migration, water and governance.</p>	100
<p>Self-Directed and Collaborative Interventions</p> <p>Students develop, independently and collaboratively, systems-level interventions in selected impact areas. This component of the course asks students to synthesize their understandings of core curriculum topics and particular impact areas, in order to produce valid interventions in a real-world context.</p>	80

V. Assessment overview

This pilot utilizes a range of authentic assessment formats that reflect the action-oriented nature and real-world focus of the course. This includes case study, project and portfolio based assessment tasks.

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

This 300-hour pilot 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.

VI. Assessment model

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Weighting of final grade (%)
External		50
Individual project	Students plan and undertake a self-directed intervention within an impact area of their choice. They submit a write-up focused on the design and implementation process for the intervention and the application of systems thinking methodologies.	35
Portfolio extract	For this component, students curate and further reflect upon a selection of original artefacts from their impact portfolio that serve as evidence of significant learning in relation to the course competencies.	15

Internal		50
Case study	Students undertake a day long (6 hour) assessment experience during which they explore an unseen case study produced by the IB. Part A of this task consists of a collaborative group activity where students explore stakeholder perspectives. Part B of this task consists of an individual analysis.	15
Collaborative project	Students work in small teams to collaboratively develop an intervention in response to an impact area. This collaborative intervention task draws heavily on knowledge and skills from the core curriculum, as well as requiring strong foundations in systems thinking and effective teamwork.	35

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For further information about Mulgrave, visit www.mulgrave.com

For more on how the DP prepares students for success at university, visit: www.ibo.org/en/university-admission