

Env. Systems and Societies (ESS)

What is the Environmental Systems and Societies (ESS) course?

The ESS is the first fully transdisciplinary course within the International Baccalaureate. It covers both the social and the experimental sciences. It is a multifaceted course that enables the student to explore the cultural, economic, ethical, political and social interactions of societies with the environment. The course has a large practical component and therefore, demands the experimental rigour expected of an experimental science course, like biology or chemistry. The course also balances scientific approach with a human-centred perspective, examining environmental issues from a social and cultural viewpoint.

What knowledge and skills would I develop, as a learner?

The learner, in the pursuit of gaining competence in the ESS, develops skills of designing, conducting and interpreting social and scientific research, conducting statistical analyses, applying scientific and social-science research methodologies to solving problems, communicate findings using models, charts, graphs, multimedia and, eventually, communicate social science and environmental research findings, using academic writing. The learner in the process, acquires the knowledge and understanding of environmental systems and learns to apply the skills to analyse environmental systems and societies. In addition, the learner develops a critical awareness that environmental problems are caused and solved by individuals and societies. In addition, the student is able to come up with innovative solutions to environmental issues by engaging actively in local and global contexts.

What are the key features of the DP ESS curriculum?

The DP ESS curriculum covers the entire breadth of the environmental systems and societies, from the social origins and foundations of environmental awareness, to sustainability of systems, ecosystems, biodiversity and conservation to food and soil systems. The course extensively covers the the human-environment dynamics by delving into the origins and causes of environmental pollution of the atmosphere, water bodies, degradation of soil systems, their impact on human population.

How does assessment look like, in ESS?

In DP ESS, students are assessed both externally and internally. ESS students undertake an internal assessment (IA) scheme. Internal assessment is assessed through a single individual investigation task. Student work is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB. At the end of the course, students' abilities are measured by means of external assessment. The external assessment of ESS consists of of two written papers, the first paper, involving analysis and evaluation of the data in the given unknown case study and the second paper containing short-answer and data-based questions.

How will the DP ESS course help me later, in my career and life?

The DP ESS course prepares students both professionally and academically, creating the ground by fostering attitudes and qualities of the mind to allow students to become lifelong learners. The course eliminates the "academic versus practical" divide plaguing most other courses. ESS is a radically innovative transdisciplinary subject and students passionate about the environment could pursue environment-related interdisciplinary courses in college. Careers in environmental science are significantly varied, ranging from environmental law, government environmental policy and planning to extensive environmental field work and advocacy in national and international governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.