Universität Zürich[UZH]

School for Transdisciplinary Studies

Connecting Minds
Building Bridges
Creating Futures

5 years STS

Celebrating five years of STS means celebrating a community of dedicated students, teachers, initiatives, and societal partners who co-create inter- and transdisciplinary learning at UZH.

The STS has opened spaces for exchange, collaboration and discovery, empowering its community to think beyond boundaries and pioneer new forms of learning.

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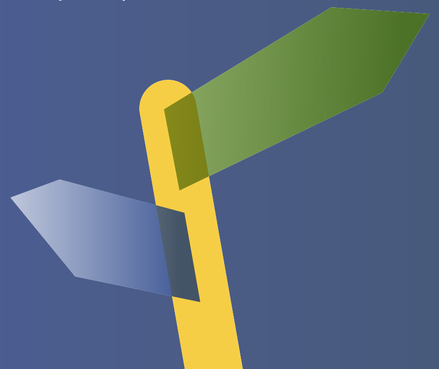
From Vision to Reality

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Siegert
Deputy President and Vice President Education and Student Affairs, President of the STS Executive Board

Five years ago, the University of Zurich set up a central platform to enable students and teachers from all faculties to connect with each other, address complex challenges and develop solutions together: the School for Transdisciplinary Studies (STS).



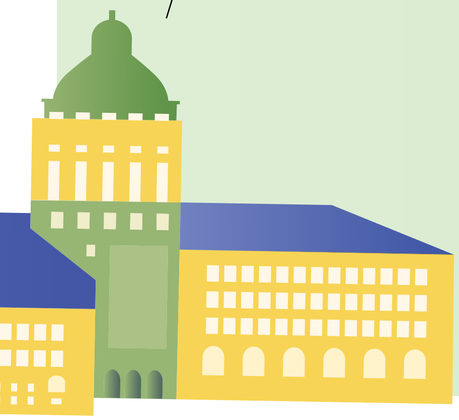
Today, the STS is a recognized hub for innovative inter- and transdisciplinary teaching and learning. It remains unique in Switzerland, bringing together students, leading experts from all faculties and industry, and societal partners.

The challenges we all face require graduates who can build bridges: connecting ideas and stakeholders, navigating complexity and turning insights into action. The STS course program enables students to develop these skills in real-world contexts through teaching and learning methods that embrace experimentation, collaboration and reflection.

Over the past five years, the STS has grown from five pioneering courses into a wide-ranging portfolio that includes a minor study program, inter- and transdisciplinary flagship courses, and future skills courses. The STS has established a thriving community of practice at UZH, where students, teaching staff and partners can share their expertise, exchange best practices and explore innovative teaching and learning methods.

This report celebrates the milestones of this journey, as well as the people who made them possible. It also invites you to continue exploring new forms of collaboration and establishing new connections. The STS is a commitment to making our university a place where the next generation can not only learn about the world but also learn how to shape it. Let us continue to connect minds, build bridges and create futures together.

Milestones



2021

A Journey Begins
In its first semester, the STS offers five courses on entrepreneurship, sustainability, digitalization, ethics and education.

2022

Launch of ULF transdisciplinary innovation
Seed funding through the UZH teaching fund enables professors and privatdozents to design inter- and transdisciplinary flagship courses and expand the STS portfolio – a milestone for cross-faculty creativity and experimentation.

2023

Visibility & Reach
With its own section in the UZH course catalogue, STS courses become more visible and accessible to all students. Another highlight: over 1,000 course bookings in a single semester.

2024

Launch of the First STS-Minor Digital Skills
The study program, offered by the Digital Society Initiative, enables students across disciplines to meet the challenges of the digital transformation.

Building a Community of Practice
In the first workshop, teachers, students and facilitators share best practices and strengthen UZH's inter- and transdisciplinary network.

Strengthening Interdisciplinary Teaching
A new UZH guideline gives interdisciplinary electives a higher priority within the assigned teaching load.

2025

Five-Year Anniversary

STS Goes Didactica
The new course "Transdisziplinarität in der Lehre" equips teaching staff with know-how and tools to design innovative teaching formats and connects them with peers across disciplines.

"The School for Transdisciplinary Studies at UZH is an invaluable initiative, as it equips students with inter- and transdisciplinary skills that are essential for the future. Learning to think and collaborate across disciplinary boundaries is not only inspiring but also crucial for tackling the complex challenges ahead."

Prof. Dr. med. Claudia Witt
Director of the Institute for Complementary and Integrative Medicine, Director of the Digital Society Initiative, Member of the STS Executive Board

Connecting Minds

Climate change, digital transformation, global health, and migration – the grand challenges of our time do not stop at disciplinary boundaries. Addressing them requires transdisciplinary, holistic solutions. The STS approaches these issues through a UZH network dedicated to inter- and transdisciplinary (ITD) research and teaching.

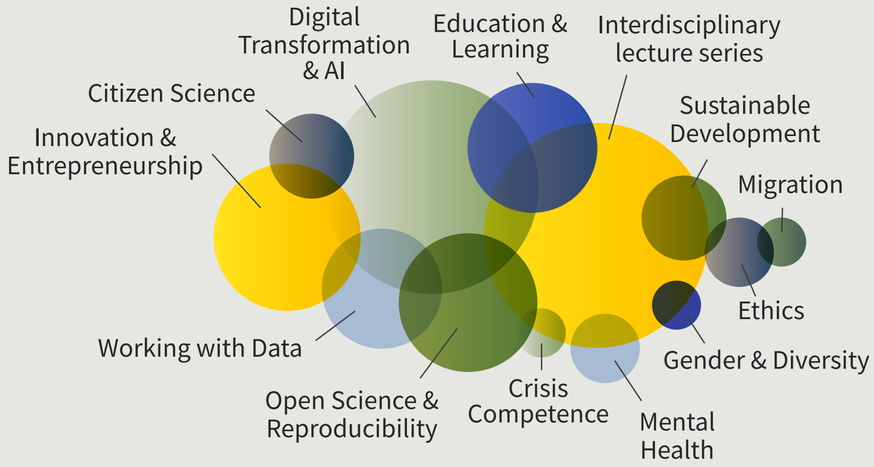
STS provides:

→ administrative and organizational support
→ didactic know-how
→ quality assurance
→ experimental space for innovative, cross-faculty teaching
→ guidance in communication
→ best practices in ITD education & exchange within the ITD community

The STS portfolio

- **Inter-/Transdisciplinary courses** address future-oriented and cross-cutting topics, engaging with pressing issues in the context of today's so-called grand challenges.
- **Future Skills courses** focus on transversal, hands-on competences and cross-disciplinary methods.

STS portfolio by topics



Spotlight on an STS Course

Building Bridges

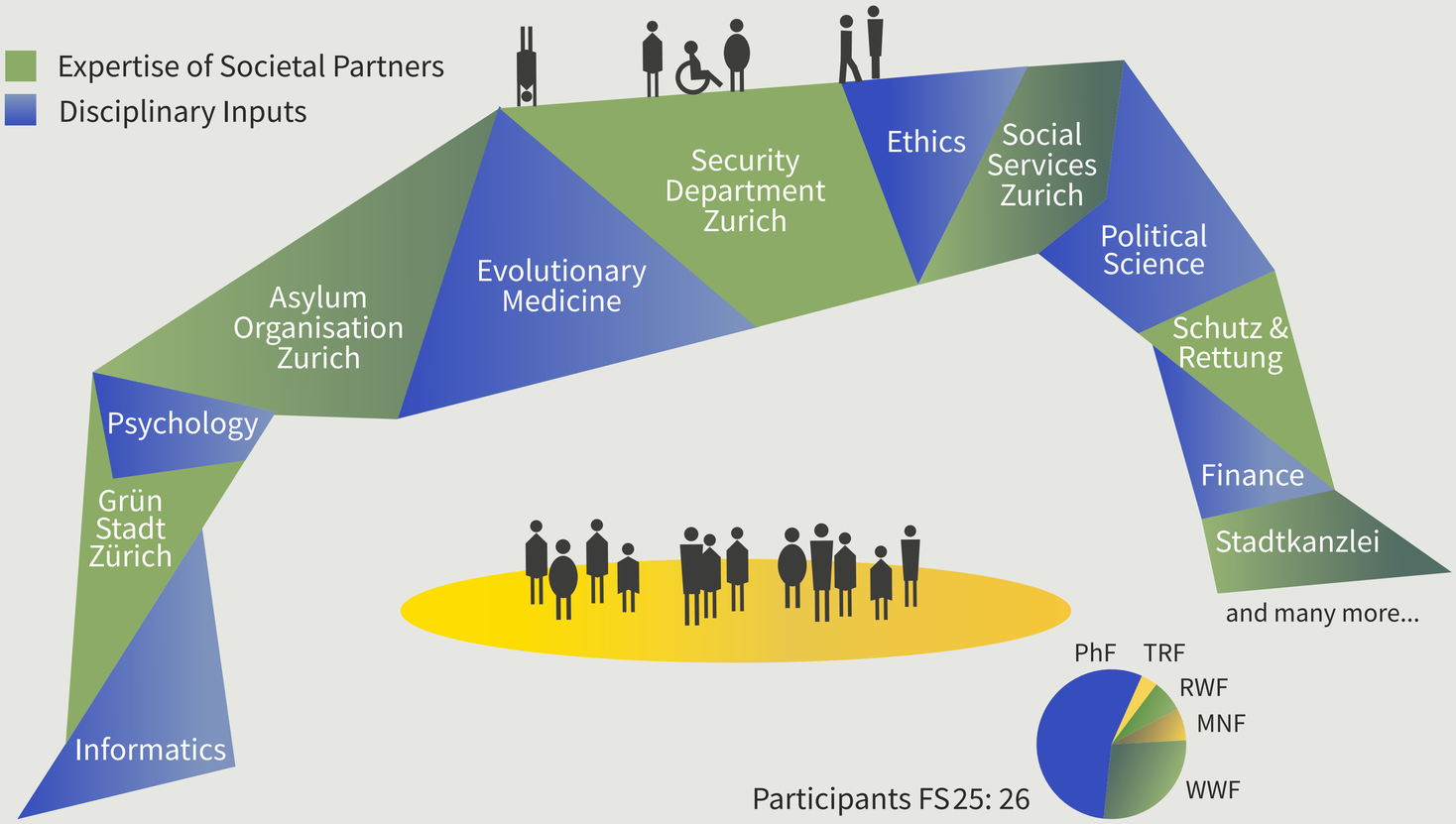
"The successful delivery of a transdisciplinary module demands a willingness to transcend one's disciplinary comfort zone and embrace intellectual humility – the courage to recognize the boundaries of one's expertise."

Prof. Dr. Dr. med. Frank Rühli
Module coordinator, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Director of the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine

The Crisis and the City:
Challenges and Crisis Competence in Urban Zurich

This ULF flagship course, run by the UZH Center for Crisis Competence (CCC), equips students with knowledge and strategies to address Zurich's urban challenges, such as conflicts in public spaces, the pandemic or climate change, from multiple perspectives.

Using a transdisciplinary co-teaching approach, experts from UZH and the city administration share their knowledge and perspectives. Through didactic methods, including excursions, problem-based learning and participatory fieldwork, students from several faculties work on solutions for current challenges, for example conflicts of use in Zurich's Bäckeranlage park. The course fosters the integration of diverse perspectives, critical thinking and problem-solving skills when it comes to navigating urban crises.



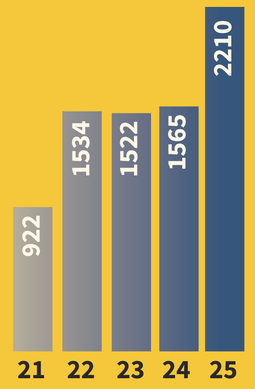
STS in Numbers

Creating Futures

“STS courses add clear academic and cross-disciplinary value, and the sustained interest of our students underscores their importance.”

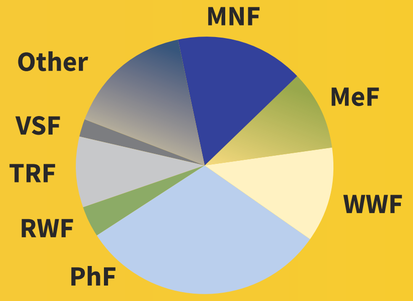
Dr. Hanno Degner
Study program coordinator
Political Science

Over **7,700** students from all UZH faculties

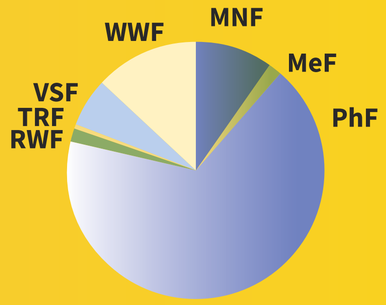


Students per year 2021–25

10 Teaser videos on STS courses



Faculty affiliation of STS teaching staff



Students by faculty 2021–25

Over **200** teachers

8 Flagship courses funded by ULF td_innovation

Over **80** courses since 2021

Voices of STS

Prof. Dr. Nick Netzer

“As a member of the Executive Board, I have accompanied the STS since its founding. It is impressive to see how it has developed over the past five years. Today, the STS stands as a true trailblazer in the university landscape and an outstanding example of how students can be empowered to think and act transdisciplinarily in addressing the complex challenges of our time. I look forward to the next five years and the exciting developments that lie ahead.”

Vice Dean of Studies at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Informatics,
Professor of Economics,
Member of the STS Executive Board

Viola Särkiluoto, MA

“I value the STS for its wide selection of courses that address timely topics and are designed to be meaningful and accessible for students from every discipline. To complement my Master’s program,

I chose four STS courses. What I found most exciting was collaborating with students and experts from a variety of disciplines, which broadened my thinking. This continues to benefit me in my current role as a PhD researcher, as I constantly draw on my ability to connect different perspectives and approaches.”

Alumna Modern Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Social Sciences,
Student of STS courses

Prof. Dr. Anja Schulze

“Teaching in the Innovathon is enriching because students from different disciplines bring unique perspectives that challenge our own ways of thinking. This requires careful guidance, since collaboration across disciplines can create friction – but it is precisely this collaboration that students later describe as highly rewarding. Preparing the course materials for such a diverse audience also broadens our view as teachers, because we need to make complex ideas accessible beyond our own field. For students, the real value lies in experiencing transdisciplinary teamwork, which is an essential skill for solving real-world problems and highly relevant beyond university.”

Module coordinator “UZH Innovathon: The Digitalization of Mobility”,
Associate Professor of Mobility and Digital Innovation Management

Prof. Dr. Titus Mangham-Neupert

“The STS is a bold experiment in integrating inter- and transdisciplinary teaching into a university setting where courses are largely tied to disciplinary study programs. Personally, I am very happy that I could contribute to building the first study program based at the STS, the Master’s minor Digital Skills. We had great freedom to build this program and used it to integrate competences that students would otherwise not acquire, such as artistic reflections and challenge-based team work. Congratulations to the exceptional STS team on their successful first five years! I cannot wait to see how the story continues …”

Study program director DSI Minor Digital Skills,
Director Digital Society Initiative,
Professor of Condensed Matter Theory

Thank You!

It is the people who bring the STS to life. With the dedication of its members and the commitment of those yet to join, the STS will keep growing as a place where ideas connect and new possibilities emerge.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has helped the STS thrive and a warm welcome to all who want to further shape its journey!

Universität Zürich[UZH]

School for Transdisciplinary Studies

Impressum

Content and Text
School for Transdisciplinary Studies

Design, Structure and Text
Rosa Guggenheim

Links and Resources
Teaching Tool:
Inter- and Transdisciplinary Teaching

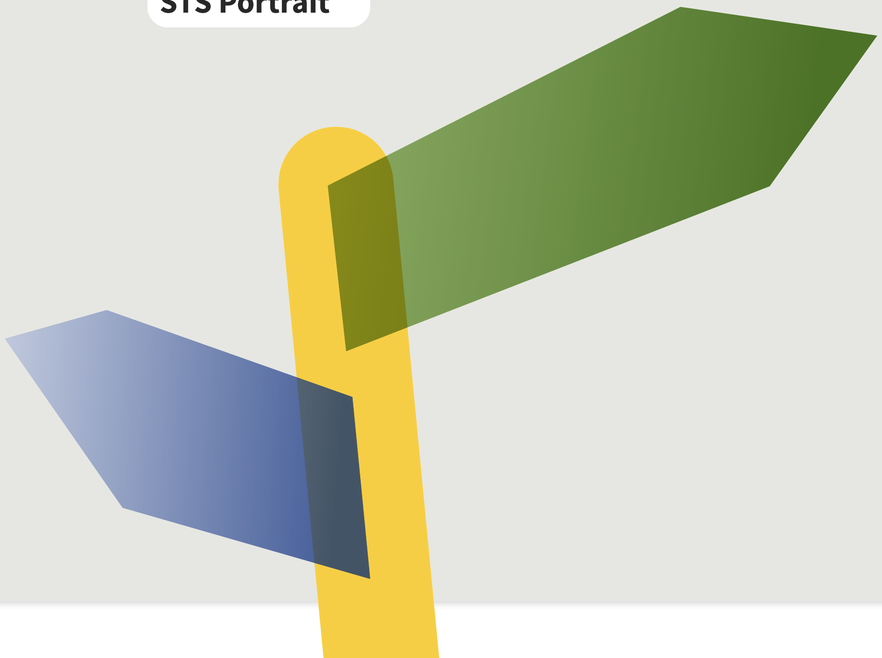
UZH News articles:
Building Bridges, Expanding Horizons
“Let’s be generous!”

Fact Sheet on Including Cross-Faculty Teaching in UZH Professors’ Assigned Teaching Load: Guideline

sts.uzh.ch

Instagram

STS Portrait



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