



Content

- 1. Background of the School for Transdisciplinary Studies (STS)**
- 2. Courses Illustrating Transdisciplinary Practices and Approaches**
- 3. Benefits and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Higher Education**
- 4. Strategies to Meet the Challenges of Transdisciplinary Higher Education**
- 5. Lessons Learned and Conclusion**
- 6. Questions for Discussion**



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School for Transdisciplinary Studies

1. Background of the School for Transdisciplinary Studies (STS)

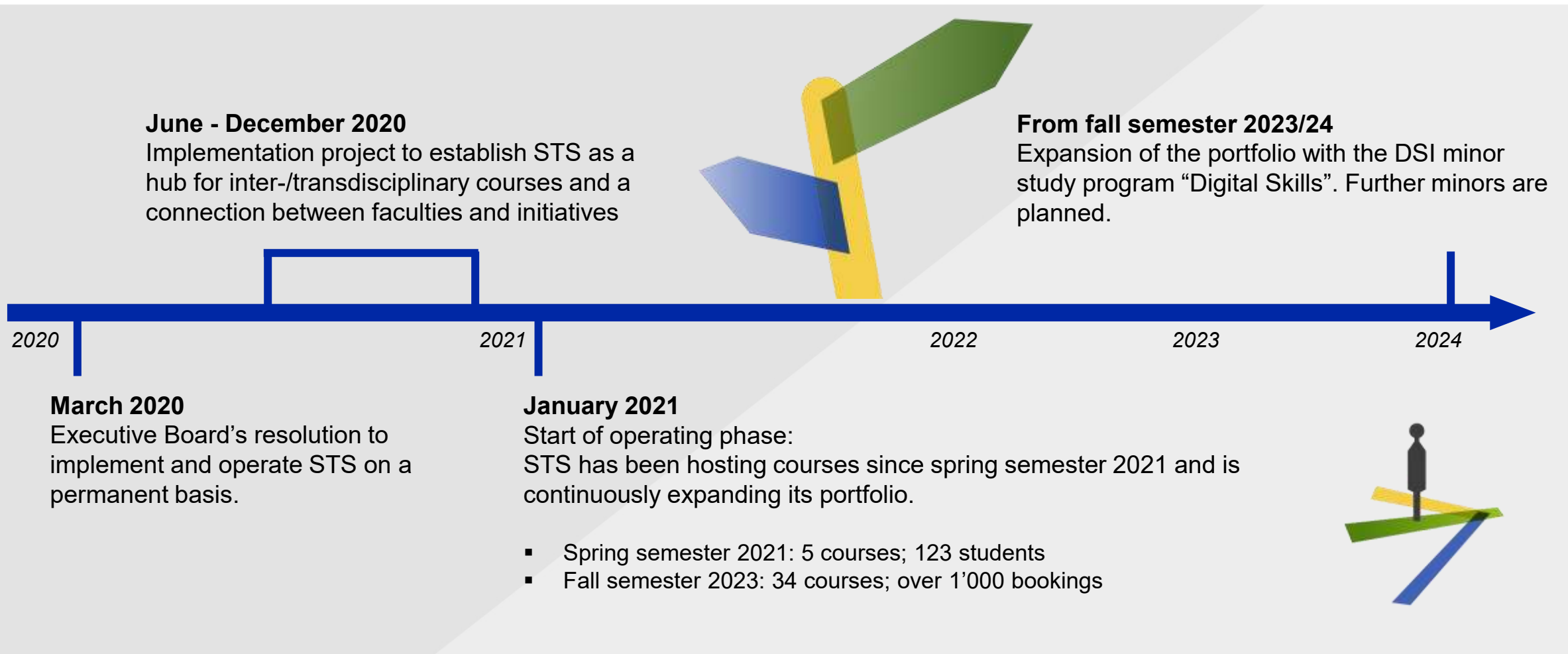
STS increases the visibility of inter-/transdisciplinary teaching at UZH

- **Modern day's societies are confronted with major challenges**
 - University education is increasingly unable to stay within historically developed disciplinary boundaries
 - Many initiatives and teams at UZH address such challenges in their research inter-/transdisciplinarily
- **At UZH, STS acts as a hub between faculties and inter-/transdisciplinary initiatives**
 - Inter-/transdisciplinary courses are made available via STS
 - STS courses complement regular study programs

Mission statement: <https://www.sts.uzh.ch/en/About-us/Mission-statement.html>



STS milestones: from its foundation to a look ahead





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2. Courses Illustrating Transdisciplinary Practices and Approaches

Mentoring for the Next Generation

- Students support a socially disadvantaged child to better cope with the challenges in school and everyday life
- The students are coached by practice partners from established educational initiatives in Switzerland
- Theoretical part of the course: students learn about the impact and challenges of civic engagement on a societal, personal and economic level
- Professors from three different disciplines: Business Economics, Psychology, Sociology

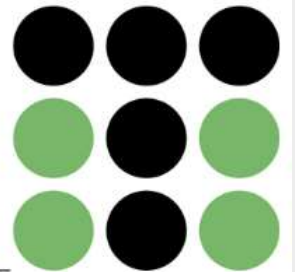


[Link to Course Catalogue](#) (German only)

Innovathon: The Digitalization of Mobility

- Students and teachers from various faculties tackle the complex challenges of the digitalization of mobility
- Students
 - address challenges posed by practice partners
 - develop innovative solutions in a “design sprint”-format; solutions are pitched to a jury and the best teams win a prize
- Hands-on program

UZH
INNOVATHON



[Link to Course Catalogue](#)



Study Week: Sustainable Development and Transformation

- Centers around sustainable development and transformation
- Students
 - engage in real-world projects through a multi-stakeholder process
 - learn to integrate knowledge from various fields and develop strategies for sustainability goals at local and global levels
 - collaborate with diverse peers on case studies provided by practice partners, who also act as coaches



[Link to Course Catalogue](#) (German only)



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School for Transdisciplinary Studies

3. Benefits and Challenges of Transdisciplinary Higher Education



Benefits

For students

- Holistic problem-solving
- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Fostering critical thinking
- Insights from dedicated UZH instructors and practice partners
- Unique educational experience that sets students apart from their peers and opens doors to exciting career opportunities

For teaching staff

- Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Visibility and profiling as experts
- Innovative teaching methods
- Professionalization and networking

Challenges

Institutional Challenges

- Credit Transfer Eligibility
- Transdisciplinary collaboration
- Different terminologies, methodologies and epistemologies

Challenges within the courses

- Heterogeneous students
 - Varying prior knowledge
 - Communication barriers
 - Different learning styles and approaches to problem solving
 - Time management and schedule conflicts (different schedules due to different study programmes)



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4. Strategies to Meet the Challenges of Transdisciplinary Higher Education

Problem-solving strategies

Institutional Challenges

- Credit Transfer Eligibility
- Transdisciplinary collaboration
- Different terminologies, methodologies and epistemologies

Challenges within the courses

- Heterogeneous students
 - Varying prior knowledge
 - Communication barriers
 - Different learning styles and approaches to problem solving
 - Time management and schedule conflicts (different schedules due to different study programmes)

- Institutional support (eg. establishing transdisciplinary units or centers)
- Fostering faculty and student collaboration (e.g. provide platforms for sharing experiences and best practices)

- Creating a common foundation
- Fostering inclusive communication
- Team-based learning
- Assessing for diverse outcomes
- Regular feedback and reflection
- Transparency about objectives and expectations
- Flexible course design
- Support resources



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5. Lessons Learned and Conclusion



Take-home Message and Reflection

- Through our experience, we have observed that transdisciplinary practices and approaches to learning and teaching are desired, but not easy to implement at a comprehensive university.
 - Building bridges between disciplines is proving to be a challenge.
 - Nevertheless, since its establishment in 2021, the School for Transdisciplinary Studies has sought to promote inter- and transdisciplinary learning and teaching by supporting coordination and collaboration among the different faculties at UZH.
- Planning and teaching inter- and transdisciplinary courses require (more) time and effort. What motivates teaching staff and course managers to walk the extra mile?



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6. Questions for Discussion



Questions for Discussion

- The EUA's vision for 2030 aims for "Universities without walls". This aim should start within the university itself: What strategies can be applied, even on a small scale, to break through disciplinary boundaries, share and co-create knowledge, and enable students to develop a holistic approach throughout their studies?
- What other challenges of transdisciplinary higher education do conference participants face in their work?
- Would you like to come forward with your experiences with (or good practices of) cross-faculty co-creation and student collaboration in interdisciplinary programme development?