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The Education Newsletter



International Football Pathways
for Young Players

When Good Students
Score Low

*Who Designs the
Designer?*

From Classroom
to Control Rooms:
The Future of Healthcare

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We would like to invite our readers to participate in our exciting Photo Contest by sharing powerful moments that reflect learning, mentoring, and student life. The winning entry will be featured on the cover of our newsletter. Please send your entries to write@uconnectworld.com. Submissions must be in portrait format.

Meet the Photo Contest Winner



Ms. Komal has been associated with education for over a decade, with experience in teaching and counselling in India and abroad, and has been part of University Connection for the past seven years. Passionate about learning and supporting students, she believes in the power of listening, understanding, guiding, and counselling.

Beyond education, she enjoys exploring and recreating Indian tribal and folk art, including Warli, Madhubani, Kalamkari, Pichwai, Gond, Saura, and Bhil art. This particular piece is inspired by Warli Art and depicts Harvest Time, celebrating community, nature, and the joy of togetherness.



Contributors

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COVER STORY

Beyond the Trial: Understanding International Football Pathways for Young Players

By Ravneet Kaur,
Official India Representative for Rierasport Barcelona

International football can offer new challenges, coaching and competition— but a promising opportunity is only valuable when it contributes to long-term development.



For many young footballers, the dream eventually travels beyond the local pitch. A stronger league. Better coaching. A different football culture. The possibility of training overseas and, just maybe, being noticed by a professional club. For families, though, the more useful question is not simply, "Is there an opportunity abroad?" It is, "Is this the right developmental environment for my child, at this stage?" Having spent nearly a decade navigating football development as a parent and mentor, I have learnt that international exposure can be immensely valuable. But going abroad, in itself, is not a pathway.

A camp, trial, or short-term training experience can certainly be valuable, giving a young player the opportunity to experience a different level of intensity, coaching, or competition. However, this is quite different from committing to a development pathway with a clear understanding of where it is intended to lead.

What Does a Genuine Pathway Look Like?

For me, one of the simplest ways to assess a pathway is to ask: what happens next? There should be more to the experience than simply being present in a good football environment. The player should be training regularly, competing at an appropriate level, receiving meaningful feedback and developing physically and tactically.

Families also need to look past some of the language commonly used around international football. Words such as exposure, academy and professional environment can mean very different things depending on the programme. Who is actually coaching the player? Will there be competitive matches? How will progress be assessed? What is expected of the player, and what happens when the programme ends?

I believe one of the best measures of any experience is what the player takes away from it even if no professional opportunity follows. Has the player improved? Has the experience made them more independent, disciplined and aware of what the next level actually demands? Those outcomes matter just as much.

For Minors, Football Is Only Part of the Decision

This becomes even more important when the player is under 18. A 15- or 16-year-old may be extremely serious about football, but they are still a minor living away from home. Good football development depends as much on the surrounding environment as it does on the game itself. Parents need to understand accommodation, supervision, safeguarding, medical support, academic continuity, and who is responsible for their child outside training hours.

Education also needs to remain an integral part of the conversation. At that age, no family can know with certainty where

A good pathway should therefore keep doors open rather than force families into an unnecessary choice between football and education.

a football journey will lead. Players develop at different rates. Injuries happen. Interests evolve. The level of competition increases. A good pathway should therefore keep doors open rather than force families into an unnecessary choice between football and education.

What Are the Options at 18?

The conversation changes once a player finishes school. For some, a structured gap year can provide the time to train intensively, compete and test how serious their football ambition really is. Others may prefer programmes that combine football development with academic study. I do not think one route is automatically better than the other. What matters is whether there is structure around the decision. A year devoted to football can be hugely valuable when there are clear objectives, regular review points and an understanding of what comes afterwards. Without that, a gap year can easily become twelve months spent waiting for an opportunity to appear.

Ask Better Questions

Before investing in any international football opportunity, families should be comfortable asking difficult questions.

Who will train the player? At what level will they compete? How often will they play? How is development assessed? What exactly does "exposure" mean? For minors, who is responsible for safeguarding and education? For older players, what does the pathway realistically lead to? And there is one question families should never be afraid to ask: what happens if professional football does not materialise? That is not being negative. It is recognising that good development should broaden a young person's future, not narrow it.

International football can expose a player to new coaching philosophies, stronger competition, greater independence and a much clearer understanding of what serious football demands. But "international" should never automatically mean "better". A good pathway is one that suits the player standing in front of you—not the dream being sold around them. It should be honest about what it can offer, demanding enough to develop them and clear enough for the family to understand what comes next.

Perhaps that is ultimately the question worth asking: not simply where football might take a young player, but what the journey is helping that young person become.



There are an estimated 21.5 million registered footballers under 18 worldwide, but only around 113,000 are listed as professional players — roughly 0.5%. The journey from youth football to the professional game is therefore exceptionally competitive.
Reference: NIH - National Library of Medicine article





Who Designs the Designer?

By Dhvani Singh, Atlas ISDI Summer School Participant, 2026,
Grade 12 IBDP student, Sancta Maria International School,
Faridabad, Haryana, India

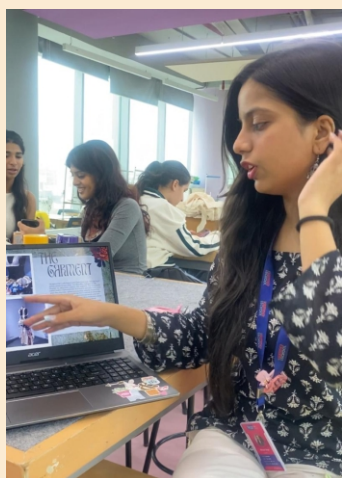
A two-week journey through fashion, creativity, independence, and Mumbai that revealed an unexpected truth: designers are shaped as much by life as they are by design.



Before immersing myself in the world of Atlas ISDI Summer School in Mumbai, I shared the common misconception that designers existed in a realm of glamour, haute couture, and aesthetics. Two weeks later, I realised design was never merely the pursuit of trends. It is about what sparks the mind, what designs the hand, and what colours the heart. **Perhaps no one captures this better than Saint Francis of Assisi: "He who works with his hands is a labourer. He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands, his head, and his heart is an artist."** More than runways, silhouettes, mood boards, colour palettes, sequins, and fabrics, design is a delicate marriage of labour and physical work, craftsmanship and critical analysis, and artistry and emotional depth, with the cherry of embellishment on top. It is the quiet metamorphosis of a designer, draping each creation with a form of expression through dexterity, contemplation, and sentiment. As the process often triumphs over the final product, the little experiences and moments along the way design the designer while the designer is designing the design, ironically.

Discovering the Many Languages of Design

The first week, I explored everything from Product Design to Spatial Design to Strategic Design to Fashion Design, and gave my all to learn and have as much fun as possible. In Product Design, I began to understand how everyday objects are thoughtfully shaped around function, usability, and human needs; even something as simple as the form of a chair or the design of a product can transform how we interact with it.



Spatial Design made me look at environments differently, teaching me how spaces, layouts, structures, and movement can influence the way people experience a place. Strategic Design took me beyond aesthetics and into the world of problem-solving, where understanding people, identifying their needs, and developing purposeful solutions became as important as creating something visually appealing. And Fashion Design brought me closest to the world I had instinctively been drawn towards for years — the language of fabrics,

silhouettes, textures, embellishments, and the stories that clothing can tell.

The Language My Heart Had Always Spoken

Yet, somewhere amidst discovery and design, I knew where my heart belonged all along, instinctively. Ever since I was seven years old, fashion design was not merely a pursuit of passion for

me; it has been my dialect, a lens through which I see the world. I truly believe that every stitch sewn, every fold of fabric, and every glimmering sequin can leave a lasting imprint on the world through the artistry of a thoughtfully designed garment. In the second week, fashion became my specialisation. I designed a garment alongside an incredible team, and from its first sketch to its final silhouette, the process was draped with countless rejections, trials of hit and miss, crazy experiments, spontaneous improvisations, and happy accidents that ultimately adorned me with something far greater than I had imagined. I learnt to translate an idea from imagination into a tangible form, refine silhouettes, experiment with fabrics and textures, work with patterns and construction, and understand that designing is as much about problem-solving as it is about creativity. Most importantly, I learnt to embrace failure as part of the process rather than as its opposite. Every alteration, every discarded idea, and every unexpected outcome taught me to look at the garment differently and ask, "What can I do with this?"

Pins covered the mannequin, fabrics covered the studio floor, and our hands carried traces of spray paint.

When Fashion Became More Than Fabric

Blair Waldorf's iconic words began to make perfect sense: "Fashion is the most powerful art there is. It is movement, design, and architecture all in one. It shows the world who we are and what we'd like to be." I finally understood why. Fashion was no longer something I simply admired from a distance. I had experienced its movement through the making of a garment, its architecture through constructing a silhouette, and its design through transforming an idea into something that could exist beyond my imagination. It was not just learning to design; it was learning to see.

Designing Independence, One Challenge at a Time

As a budding designer, independence was perhaps the best design project I undertook in my life. Learning to wash my own jeans by hand made me feel like one of my favourite sitcom characters, Rachel Green, when she said, "If I can do my own laundry, there is nothing I can't do." Drying them using nothing but an air-conditioned room and pressing them with a hair straightener taught me how to adapt and figure things out with limited resources. I learnt to negotiate in Colaba, spend my money wisely, take care of myself, navigate unfamiliar streets, network with professors, adapt to different cultures, connect with people from different paths of life, find my comfort tribe, and experience the intimacy of sharing a dorm twenty-four hours a day. Perhaps, in its own strange way, independence and design have more in common than I had ever imagined. Both demand the courage to experiment, the ability to improvise, and the willingness to make decisions without always knowing whether they will work. Just as I had to figure out how to dry my jeans without a dryer, I had to figure out how to make a design work when the original idea did not. Independence, much like design, taught me that there is rarely one correct way of doing something.

**STUDENT'S
Corner Contd.**

Mumbai: The City That Became My Runway

Beyond the fashion labs, Mumbai, a city that never stops dreaming, became a mentor for me. Sometimes, in a strange city with strangers, you end up finding who you truly are. Mumbai taught me that design, much like the city itself, is constantly moving, reinventing, adapting, and dreaming. I saw my life and the world in the same spirit as Marc Jacobs: "Life is a fashion show; the world is your runway." Mumbai became my runway, not because I was simply walking through a new city, but because for the first time, I was learning to navigate it independently, make my own choices, and decide what I wanted to create from the experiences around me.



The Designer Behind the Design

As the two weeks came to an end, I found myself answering the question of "Who designs the designer?" A designer is designed by countless glimpses of life. Sometimes, it is the little mundane moments, the obstacles of adulthood, or navigating independence. Sometimes, it is learning the largeness of life, designing your own creations, or experiencing unfamiliar places with unfamiliar people. In my case, an integral part of my experience was designed by this summer school.

My heartfelt gratitude to Atlas ISDI Summer School for creating an immersive learning lab that extended far beyond the classroom. Above all, special thanks to Prof. Bulbul Chaudhary, Pro Vice-Chancellor of ATLAS, whose encouragement and inspiring words, "It was the Almighty who made us meet, remain one of the most memorable moments of this chapter of my life."



Summer School students with Dr. Indu Shahani - Founding President and Chancellor, Atlas ISDI Mumbai (India School of Design and Innovation)





From Classrooms to Control Rooms: What Future Health Professionals Must Learn Before the System Is Under Stress

By Dr. Saravanan Thangarajan,
Harvard-trained Global Health & Health Systems Professional,
currently focusing on climate and maternal mental health,
including AI-supported approaches such as CliMent

Healthcare is evolving beyond clinical expertise. For the next generation, building a meaningful career will mean learning to navigate technology, complex systems, crises, and the human realities that exist beyond the hospital.

Most students imagine a healthcare career through classrooms, exams, white coats, hospitals, laboratories, and degrees. These still matter. But the future of healthcare will also be shaped in places students rarely see early enough: dashboards, emergency coordination rooms, digital platforms, call centres, community networks, climate events, mental health support lines, and public systems under pressure. We are preparing many students for stable professional roles while the systems they are entering are becoming more complex, more digital, more unequal, and more crisis-prone. The future health professional will not only be asked, "What do you know?" They will also be asked, "Can you act when the system is stressed?"

When Every Second Counts

I learned this most clearly during my public health systems work in Tamil Nadu. In a control room, the questions were never abstract. Which call needed escalation? Which family had already waited too long? Which bed was actually available, not just shown as available? Which ambulance could move fastest? Which district needed more support before the numbers became worse? At that scale, a delayed message was not just poor communication. It could become a delayed referral, a delayed ambulance, or a family left without clarity at the worst possible moment. That experience changed how I think about career preparation in healthcare.

Expertise Alone Cannot Move a System

Knowledge matters deeply. But knowledge alone does not move a system. Delivery depends on coordination, judgment, communication, data, trust, and the ability to connect many moving parts without losing sight of the human being at the centre. Healthcare is no longer only about individual expertise. It is increasingly about system navigation. A doctor, nurse, public health professional, counsellor, paramedic, administrator, data analyst, or health entrepreneur will need to understand how people, technology, institutions, communities, and decisions interact in real time. Students entering healthcare must learn to read data without worshipping it. Dashboards, reports, artificial intelligence tools, and digital records are becoming part of everyday healthcare. But data is not wisdom by itself. Numbers can guide action, but they can also hide people who are not counted properly. Future professionals must know how to ask: What does this number show? What does it miss? Who is invisible in this dataset? What decision will this data shape?

When Numbers Meet Reality

During large-scale public health operations, the number on a screen was only the beginning of the story. A dashboard could show call volume, bed status, or district-level demand. But the ground reality often required another layer of judgment: Was the data updated? Was the family able to reach the right person? Was the worker overwhelmed? Was the service technically available but practically inaccessible? Students entering healthcare must understand this difference early. Data should sharpen responsibility, not replace it.

From Classrooms to Control Rooms

A journey from teaching foundations, to public systems, to global health leadership



1. Classroom

Learning and teaching the foundations of care



2. Public systems

Coordination, data, and decisions under pressure



3. Harvard

Global health training and future-facing leadership



Communication Is a Core Healthcare Skill

They must also learn to communicate before confusion spreads. In a crisis, unclear communication is not a minor weakness. It can become a missed referral, a frightened family, or a team working in different directions. Communication is not a “soft skill.” It is a core delivery skill. The ability to explain clearly, listen carefully, and move information quickly across teams can change outcomes. In a control room, no single profession carries the system alone. A decision may depend on a clinician, a paramedic, a call handler, a district officer, a data team, and a family member all acting on the same information. In real systems, leadership often means getting different people to move in the same direction under pressure.

Who Is the System Missing?

Most importantly, students must learn to look for the people the system does not easily see. In maternal and child health work, I saw how risk often lived outside the hospital. A mother may not describe heat as a medical problem, but heat can shape sleep, exhaustion, blood pressure, travel, childcare, work, and mental stress. A rural family may be “covered” on paper, but still struggle with distance, transport, timing, or follow-up. A tracking system may record a mother or child as reached, but the real question is whether the support reached them in a way they could actually use.

That is where the idea of the “invisible patient” becomes real. Many people suffer before they ever reach a formal point of care. If education only trains students to respond to visible problems, it will miss the people who fall through the cracks before the system sees them.

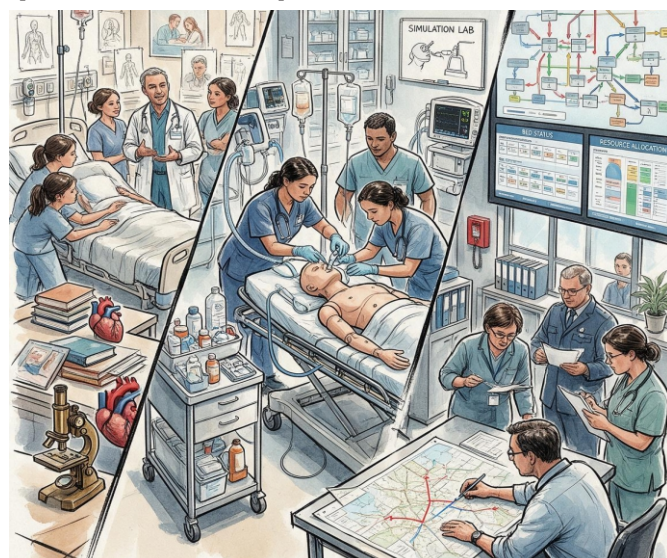
Students must also learn that digital health is only as strong as the human response behind it. A helpline may begin with a phone call, a dashboard, or a referral form, but what matters is what happens next. Did someone understand the urgency? Did they hear the fear in the caller’s voice? Did they know when to escalate? Did the system respond in time? Technology can create access, but access is not the same as care. A connected call is not the same as a resolved problem. This matters especially as artificial intelligence, telehealth, digital records, and automated systems become more common. The future professional must know how to use technology without surrendering judgment. Digital systems should help us see people earlier, respond faster, and coordinate better. They should not make suffering feel more distant, or turn a person’s need into just another entry on a screen.

Teaching Students to Solve Real Problems

This is where schools, universities, and career counsellors have a powerful role. Students should not be introduced to healthcare only as a narrow ladder of degrees and job titles. They should be exposed to real problems: emergency preparedness, climate and health, mental health systems, digital health, public communication, community-based care, workforce shortages, health equity, and ethical technology. Career guidance must also widen its lens. A student interested in healthcare does not have only one path. The future will need clinicians, yes. But it will also need health data specialists, policy professionals, implementation researchers, emergency response coordinators, digital health designers, public health communicators, hospital administrators, community health leaders, behavioural health workers, and climate-health professionals. The question is no longer only, “Which course should I choose?” A better question is, “What kind of problem do I want to help solve?”

From Career Success to Social Contribution

When students begin with problems, they build more meaningful careers. They stop seeing education as a checklist and start seeing it as preparation for contribution. They understand that a career is not only a personal achievement. It is a way of becoming useful to society. The classroom will always remain important. It gives students discipline, knowledge, and foundation. But the future will test them beyond the classroom: in communities, digital platforms, public systems, emergencies, climate events, and moments when people need more than expertise. The next generation will not inherit simple systems. They will inherit systems under stress. Preparing them well means teaching them not only how to enter healthcare, but how to strengthen the systems that healthcare depends on.



FIVE SHIFTS

From Classrooms to Control Rooms

A practical career lens for students, educators, and counsellors

1 From knowledge to action

Knowing what to do when systems are stretched.

2 From data to judgment

Reading dashboards without losing ground reality.

3 From individual roles to coordination

Moving teams in the same direction under pressure.

4 From visible patients to invisible risk

Seeing needs before people reach formal care.

5 From digital access to real care

A connected call is not the same as a resolved problem.

A better career question

What kind of problem do I want to help solve?

Based on systems insights from public health operations, maternal and child health, and digital health delivery.

Dr. Saravanan Thangarajan



Preparing Students for More Than a Degree

By Rema Menon V
Director, Counselling Point, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Getting into university is only the beginning. The real challenge is whether a student is emotionally, psychologically, and practically prepared for the transition that follows.

Every year, thousands of young people leave the familiar corridors of school and embark on one of the most significant journeys of their lives—the transition to university. They do so with a heady mix of excitement and apprehension. The promise of newfound independence, the freedom to make their own decisions, and the opportunity to spread their wings is undeniably exhilarating. Yet beneath the anticipation often lies an unspoken fear: the fear of making mistakes, taking responsibility for their choices, and navigating an unfamiliar world without the reassuring presence of family.

What we often overlook is that not every student is emotionally equipped for this transition. For young people who have grown up in highly protected environments or led relatively sheltered lives, the move to university can be far more daunting than anyone anticipates. Many have never had to manage their own finances, prepare a meal, organise their time, make independent decisions,



or cope with failure. To expect them to master all these skills overnight, while simultaneously adapting to the academic rigour of higher education, is to underestimate the magnitude of the change they are experiencing. Parents, driven by love and the desire to provide the very best opportunities, often encourage or even insist that their children study away from home. They believe that it is a rite of passage and distance nurtures independence, resilience, and maturity. In many instances, they are absolutely right.

There Is No Universal Timeline for Readiness

However, growth is not a one-size-fits-all experience. Every student embarks on this journey with a different personality, level of emotional readiness, and support system. While some flourish almost immediately, others struggle silently, afraid that acknowledging their difficulties will disappoint those who have invested so much in their future.

One such student, whom I shall call Adam, shared his experience with me.

"I'm the only child of a wealthy business family. By nature, I'm rather shy, and moving to Canada was the first time I had ever lived away from home. I couldn't secure a place in the university residence in time, so my parents rented an apartment just outside campus. Overnight, everything changed. I had grown up in Dubai's sunshine, but suddenly I was facing long, dark, freezing Canadian winters. I had to cook, clean, shop, manage my time, and take care of myself—things I had never done before.

University itself felt confusing. Unlike school, my classes were spread throughout the day, and I struggled to establish a routine. The cold, gloomy weather made it tempting to stay in bed, and gradually I began missing lectures. One missed class became several. Before I realised it, I had fallen so far behind that I failed most of my courses.

I couldn't bring myself to tell my parents. I was the first person in my family to study abroad, and everyone had enormous expectations of me. Eventually, my academic advisor called me in for a meeting. When he gently asked if something was wrong, I admitted that I was desperately homesick. He referred me to the university counselling center, but I convinced myself that I could recover on my own. Instead, I withdrew further. I had no close friends, the harsh winter felt unbearable, and the loneliness became overwhelming. Slowly, I spiralled into depression."

Adam's story is deeply moving, but it is by no means unusual.

Another student, Ravi, encountered an entirely different set of challenges.

"Throughout school, I had always excelled academically. I was consistently among the top performers, actively involved in extracurricular activities, and was honoured to serve as Head Boy. Scoring 97% in my board examinations and graduating as the Valedictorian of my batch filled both my parents and me with immense pride. I had become someone whom teachers trusted and depended upon—a familiar face at school events, often chosen to host important programmes.

When I secured admission to a prestigious research-focused university in the Netherlands, I believed I was ready for the next chapter. The admission process was highly competitive, but I met every requirement with confidence. Within three weeks of joining the programme, that confidence began to crumble. My years of succeeding through memorisation and repetition no longer served me well. Most of my classmates had come from British and European education systems where learning was application-based, analytical and discussion-oriented. No amount of rote learning helped.

The most difficult part was accepting that I was no longer the smartest student in the room. I knew my classmates would willingly help if I asked, but my identity had always been tied to being the topper. Seeking help felt like admitting failure. Assignments accumulated. Studying became a source of anxiety rather than joy. Calls from home became increasingly difficult because I did not know how to explain what I was going through. My mother sensed that something had changed. She began calling more often, but I avoided her questions. Eventually, my parents flew to the Netherlands to see me, and I finally admitted how overwhelmed I had become."

YOUR Opinion MATTERS Contd.

Adam's and Ravi's experiences illustrate two very different realities, yet they point to the same truth.

Academic excellence alone does not guarantee a successful transition to university. As educators, counsellors and parents, we devote enormous time and energy to helping students choose the right course, secure admission to prestigious institutions, build impressive profiles and help them earn scholarships. These are undoubtedly important milestones.

Yet perhaps the most important question we should be asking is far simpler: **Is the student emotionally ready for this transition?**

Preparing young people for university extends far beyond academic preparation. It involves helping them develop emotional resilience, self-awareness, adaptability and practical life skills. Equally important is teaching them that asking for help is not a



sign of weakness but a mark of wisdom and courage. In my counselling practice, I encourage students to engage in honest conversations with themselves and with their families before making life-changing decisions. I **remind them that choosing to study closer to home is not a compromise if it aligns better with their emotional readiness.** Likewise, if a student finds the transition overwhelming and needs to return home, it should never be viewed as a personal failure.

If a student finds the transition overwhelming and needs to return home, it should never be viewed as a personal failure.

What we often overlook is that not every student is emotionally equipped for this transition.

Far too often, parents hesitate because they fear the inevitable question from relatives or acquaintances:

"What will people say?"

My answer has always been unequivocal. A child's emotional well-being is infinitely more valuable than a university's reputation, a prestigious degree, or society's opinions. As parents, our role is not merely to prepare our children for university. It is to prepare them for life. That means equipping them not only with knowledge and ambition, but also with resilience, perspective and the confidence to seek support when life becomes difficult.



The transition to university is not simply a change of address or an academic milestone. It is a profound psychological and emotional journey. When we prepare students for that journey with the same care that we devote to securing their admission, we give them something far more valuable than a university education.

We give them the confidence to thrive—wherever life may take them.



Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.

At University Connection, we engage with visionary leaders and industry experts from around the world who are shaping the future of their respective fields. By bringing together their perspectives, experiences, and insights, we create meaningful conversations that connect students, educators, institutions, and professionals with the evolving world of work. UCONNECT would be incomplete without the valuable contributions of these thought leaders.

Industry
SPOTLIGHT



In today's Industry Spotlight, we are honoured to feature Maria Abraham of IBM, whose insights offer a deeper understanding of the HR industry's evolving landscape, key trends, and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

In Conversation with Maria Abraham



Which industry do you belong to, and how many years of wisdom have you gathered there?

8 years of experience in Human Resources. Over the years, I have gained experience across different aspects of HR, from recruitment and employee engagement to HR operations. This journey has helped me understand that HR is not just about managing people, but also about supporting both employees and the organisation. It has also taught me the importance of adaptability, empathy, and continuous learning in this profession.

What's the biggest misconception about your profession?

There is a common misconception that HR is an easy profession because it primarily involves dealing with people. In reality, HR professionals have to balance employee expectations with organisational goals and policies. The role often involves handling complex situations, making difficult decisions, and maintaining confidentiality. It requires patience, strong communication, and the ability to manage different perspectives.

When you're looking at a resume today, what makes you pause and say, "This one looks promising"? And what instantly makes you skeptical?

A short and crisp resume with practical experience immediately catches my attention. I look for candidates who can clearly highlight their relevant skills, experiences, and achievements without unnecessary information. Practical exposure, internships, projects, and the ability to demonstrate what they have actually learned can make a strong difference. On the other hand, resumes that are too lengthy or lack specific examples can make me skeptical.

What are the must-know technical skills in your field right now?

SAP SuccessFactors is one of the tools many HR operations professionals use across organisations. Familiarity with HR technology and HR management systems is becoming increasingly important as companies digitise their processes. Students can benefit from exploring HR platforms and understanding how technology supports recruitment, employee data, performance management, and other HR functions. Having basic digital and analytical skills can also give young professionals an advantage.

What human qualities or soft skills make someone truly stand out in your field right now?

Good communication is one of the most important qualities in HR. HR professionals interact with employees, managers, leadership teams, and candidates, so the ability to communicate clearly and respectfully is essential. Empathy, active listening, adaptability, and the ability to handle sensitive conversations are equally valuable. These qualities help build trust and create stronger workplace relationships.

Where do you see a gap between what students are taught and what your industry actually needs?

There is often a gap between theoretical learning and practical experience with HR tools. Students may understand HR concepts academically but have limited exposure to the systems and processes used in actual workplaces. Gaining hands-on experience with HR platforms, recruitment processes, and employee management systems can help bridge this gap. Internships and practical projects can be particularly valuable in preparing students for the workplace.

Even in early-career professionals, what leadership behaviours impress you the most?

Good communication and continuously upgrading your skills are leadership behaviours that stand out to me. I also appreciate young professionals who take initiative rather than waiting to be told what to do. Being open to feedback, taking responsibility for mistakes, and supporting colleagues are strong indicators of leadership potential. Leadership, in my view, is demonstrated through everyday actions and not just through a job title.

The Coolest Part of Your Job

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is getting the opportunity to offer someone a position after completing the recruitment process. It is satisfying to see a candidate progress through the different stages and finally become part of an organisation. Knowing that you have played a role in someone's career journey makes the work meaningful. It is especially rewarding when you see the person grow and succeed within the organisation.



Good Grades. Strong Students. So Why the Low Score?

By Shiva Verma,
Founder and Communication Skills Trainer, Skill Sutra

**Standardised exams test more than knowledge;
they demand strategy, consistency, adaptability,
and the ability to perform under pressure.**



Skill Sutra

A few days ago, during a team discussion at Skill Sutra, we were reviewing the mock scores of a student who had always been a topper in school. **Great grades. Strong concepts. Consistent effort.** But their SAT scores weren't reflecting any of that. And this isn't rare. Over time, working with hundreds of students at Skill Sutra, we've seen this pattern repeat itself. It makes you pause and ask: What are these exams really testing? Because it's clearly not just knowledge. These exams are performance environments. They don't reward how much you know. Rather, they reward how well you can use what you know—under pressure, within time limits, while the test adapts to you. **Yes, adapts.** In exams like the SAT, GRE, and GMAT, you're not solving a fixed paper. The difficulty adjusts based on how you perform. This means that consistency matters more than brilliance. A strong start shapes what comes next. A weak one makes recovery harder.



Why Familiar Strategies Stop Working

I remember a conversation we had internally while designing prep plans. "Why do our strongest students struggle in the beginning?" The answer was simple. School prepares you for familiarity, but these exams test you on uncertainty. In school, you revise patterns. Here, however, you face variations. In school, time is flexible. Here, time defines performance. So even capable students feel stuck, not because they lack ability, but because they've never trained for this kind of environment. We've also seen students swing between extremes. Some take prep too casually, while others go all in—studying for hours every day, only to burn out. Neither works. What works is far less dramatic: Structured effort, repeated consistently. **Not exciting. But effective.**

Before the Lesson Comes the Diagnosis

One of the biggest changes we made at Skill Sutra came from this realisation: we stopped leading with teaching and started by first understanding.

Where is the student right now?
What mistakes are they making?
How do they perform under time pressure?

Without this, preparation becomes generic, and generic preparation rarely leads to strong results.

Why One Size Doesn't Fit Every Learner

This is also where 1:1 learning started making more sense to us. In group settings, teaching is standard. But mistakes aren't. With personalised sessions, feedback is immediate, patterns are spotted faster, and strategy evolves with the student. It's not about more attention, but it's about relevant attention.

*School prepares
you for familiarity,
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Another common mistake we noticed? Jumping into full-length mocks too early. It almost always leads to low scores and shaken confidence. So we simplified the process: Start with question types. Then build sectional strength and only then move to mocks. It sounds basic. But most people rush this.

Timing the actual test is another area where students go wrong. Many want to "just attempt once and see." But an early attempt without readiness often leads to: underperformance, retakes, and unnecessary pressure. We now advise students to attempt only when their performance is stable, not based on hope, but on data.

There Is No Universal Playbook

We also get questions about exams like TMUA and AP Calculus, and they require a different mindset. TMUA focuses on reasoning—how you approach unfamiliar problems. AP Calculus demands conceptual clarity and step-by-step accuracy. Treating them like SAT or GRE preparation often leads to inefficiency. This is something we've had to refine over time at Skill Sutra as well. One thing we're very conscious of is that while test preparation matters, it's only one part of the bigger picture.



Students are also building their academic depth, extra curriculars, and long-term direction. Preparation should support that, not take over it. If there's one thing we've learned through all of this, it's this: Good preparation isn't just about improving scores.

It builds consistency.
It builds clarity.
It builds the ability to stay composed under pressure.

And those are skills that go far beyond any exam.

Progress Rarely Happens Overnight

That student we discussed earlier? Once we shifted their approach—focused on patterns, consistency, and timing—their scores improved.

Not overnight. But steadily. And that's usually how real progress looks.



More Than the Crime Lab: Rethinking Careers in Forensic Science

By Dr Susanta Das, Professor of Physics
and Dean of School of Science,
Ajeenkya D Y Patil University, Pune

From crime labs and DNA analysis to cyber investigations and AI, forensic science is evolving into a multidisciplinary career landscape with more pathways than students may realise.

Ask most people what a career in forensic science looks like, and they'll describe a lab coat, a magnifying glass, and maybe a courtroom scene from television. After years of teaching this subject, I can tell you the real picture is a lot bigger and a lot more interesting.

Forensic science, at its core, is simply the application of the scientific method to matters of law (Echaore-McDavid, 2010). But that one-line definition hides just how wide the field has grown. It pulls from biology, chemistry, physics, technology, psychology, and law all at once, which means it was never going to produce just one kind of job. Its everyday work, which includes examining evidence, interpreting it, testifying in court, maintaining the chain of custody, maps onto a whole range of distinct roles within the justice system. Biology, toxicology, questioned document analysis, digital and cyber forensics, forensic chemistry, forensic psychology — each of these is a career track in its own right, not a subplot within one. And because forensic work ultimately serves the administration of justice, professionals in this field stay in demand wherever legal and investigative systems exist.

What's changed and what I want to talk about here is the pace of that growth. Cybercrime, artificial intelligence, and automation have pushed forensic careers well beyond the lab and the police station, into private industry and research. If you're a student weighing this field today, the honest answer is that your career will depend less on the degree you start with and more on how often you're willing to update it.

Where the field is heading

- Career pathways are moving away from purely lab-based work toward AI-driven, automated, and genomics-driven roles.
- Cybercrime has made digital and cyber forensics one of the fastest-growing, highest-demand branches of the field.
- Employers now expect professionals to keep upskilling continuously — career longevity depends on that, not just the qualification you walked in with.
- The job market has expanded well beyond law enforcement, into data science, finance, and IT.
- Education, hands-on exposure, and ethical grounding have become prerequisites for advancement, not boxes you tick once and forget.

What we actually teach and why

When we design a forensic science curriculum, every piece of it is meant to feed directly into career readiness. Students start with the fundamentals of forensic science and crime scene investigation — the entry point for almost every career in this field. From there, core subjects like forensic biology and serology, fingerprinting and questioned document analysis, toxicology, DNA fingerprinting, digital and cyber forensics, forensic psychology, ballistics, and forensic law each open onto a specific specialisation a graduate can build a career around. Alongside

*Every stage
is a checkpoint,
and at each one,
the range of
careers available
to a student
only grows*

the theory, we push hard on hands-on, applied exposure, because that's exactly the practical competence employers are screening for when they hire. And the research route (projects, internships, dissertations) is how students move into academic and research careers, so that by the time they graduate, they're prepared for both the applied and the scholarly side of the field.

The many doors this field opens

Core forensic Roles:

Forensic scientist / analyst, crime scene investigator, forensic biologist/toxicologist, questioned document examiner, digital/cyber forensic analyst.

Government and Investigative Agencies:

Forensic Science Laboratories (FSL), CID, CBI, NIA, RAW, IB, and police/crime branches.

Academia and Research:

Assistant professor, researcher, Ph.D. / postdoctoral pathways, national/international research centres and laboratories.

Allied Sectors:

Data analyst, banking/finance fraud and document auditor, IT industry roles, accounting and fraud-investigation analyst.

Specialised Niches:

Criminal psychologist, forest-department crime investigator, entomologist, victimologist, odontologist, ballistics examiner.

Higher education as a career route in itself:

M.Sc./Ph.D. in forensic science, criminology, or cyber forensics, backed by competitive exams like GATE, NET, IIT-JAM, and SET for those aiming at research or teaching.

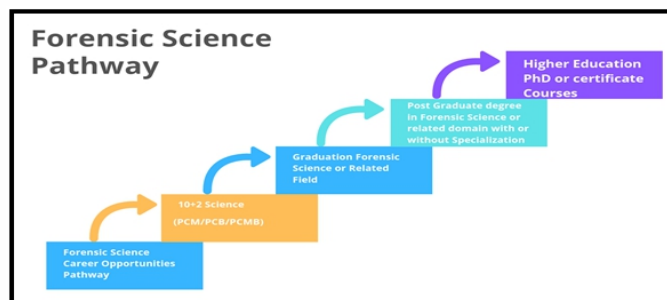


Figure 1: The education pathway into forensic science."

I like to think of this as a map rather than a ladder. It starts at 10+2 with a science stream such as PCM, PCB, or PCMB — moves

If I had to read the tea leaves on where this job market is going, I'd point straight at that cybersecurity cluster and the emphasis on professional development — the future isn't only in the lab; it's in digital forensics and in people who keep learning. And the tight link between “education” and “students” confirms something I already believed: academia is still the main pipeline into this field, which is exactly why internships and partnerships matter so much at the undergraduate stage.

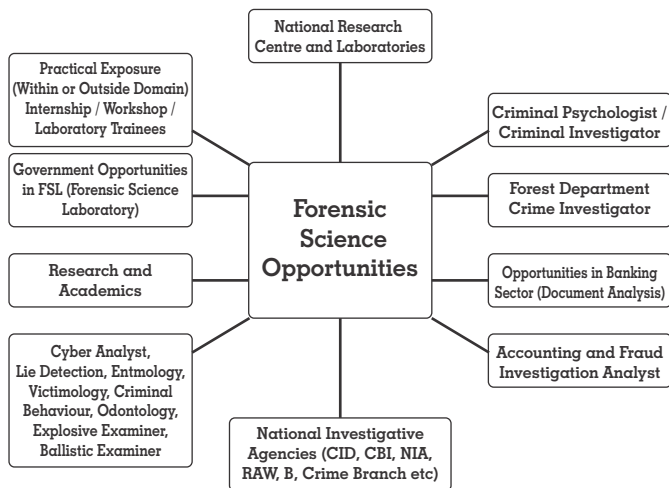


Figure 3: What kind of research this field produces.

Journal articles dominate, by a wide margin, which tells you career-related knowledge in this field is peer-reviewed and evidence-driven rather than word-of-mouth. Books and book chapters take up a meaningful share too, which makes sense, since so much of a student's early exposure to forensic careers comes from textbooks. Dissertations hold a solid share of their own, and preprints and conference proceedings show where the newest, still-forming ideas are showing up first. My takeaway for students: read the journals if you want to track where the field is moving — digital forensics, AI integration, and so on, but if you actually want a grounded career plan, the textbooks and graduate-level research are still where the real depth lives.

Document Type Distribution

Document Type	Approximate Percentage
book	55%
book chapter	5%
conference proceedings article	3%
dataset	1%
dissertation	10%
editorial	1%
journal article	15%
journal issue	2%
preprint	2%
reference entry	1%

If there's one thing I want a student to take away from all of this, it's that forensic science was never meant to be a single job title. It's a field that keeps generating new doors as fast as it opens the old ones, and the professionals who do best in it are the ones who keep walking through them.

Why Evidence and Interdisciplinary Learning Matter

Forensic science is no longer confined to the laboratory—it is a dynamic, multidisciplinary field evolving with technology, data, artificial intelligence, genomics and cyber investigations. At our institution, we believe education must evolve alongside these changes. Our responsibility is not merely to prepare students for today's careers, but to equip them for the opportunities of tomorrow. We aim to nurture professionals who can think critically, work responsibly and contribute meaningfully across justice, technology, research and industry. The future of forensic science will not be defined solely by the technologies we develop, but by the scientific integrity, critical thinking and ethical responsibility with which we use them."



Your Education Digest:

Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events
within this section of UCONNECT

Australian Education: The Outreach Collective recently shared their reflections on hosting The India Lens, a closed-door working session convened with Austrade South Asia in Mumbai on 18 August 2026, emphasizing that direct dialogue between India's senior guidance counsellors and Australian university leaders is key to bridging the gap between counsellor insight and institutional strategy. They highlighted the session as a crucial platform for moving beyond one-sided presentations toward a genuine two-way exchange, bringing together a curated group of senior counsellors with leaders from more than fifteen Australian universities to discuss the realities shaping student and family decision-making today.

Through an Austrade panel showcasing the diversity of offerings from leading Australian universities, followed by an evidence-backed presentation of the counsellor perspective drawn from TOC's own survey of senior counsellors across metro and Tier 2 and 3 cities in India, the discussion broke down what's actually driving family expectations versus outdated assumptions about the Australian higher education pathway. The discussion focused on four key areas: awareness, evolving expectations of Indian families, resources to bridge information gaps, and opportunities for collaboration between counsellors and universities. Ultimately, the session underscored a shared commitment to better serving Indian students navigating Australian higher education, while highlighting the value of counsellor insight in shaping more informed institutional strategies.



Institutional Collaborations: The India-Thailand Education Forum 2026, organised by The Smart Edge in collaboration with Bangkok University, brought together industry stakeholders and education leaders to explore opportunities to build a stronger India-Thailand Education & Talent Corridor. Held on 21 August 2026 at The Leela Ambience, Gurugram, the Forum centred on "From Student Mobility to Skills, Careers & Global Opportunity." Discussions moved beyond international education as student mobility, exploring student and faculty exchange, industry exposure, internships, employability, future skills, entrepreneurship, experiential learning and institutional collaboration.

A key theme was perception. While Thailand is often associated with tourism, the Forum explored whether it could also be recognised for higher education and global opportunity. The conversations brought together three interconnected perspectives: academia and student mobility, industry and employability, and the diplomatic and Asian context. Rather than positioning Thailand simply as another study destination, the Forum considered its potential role within a broader Asian education and talent ecosystem. The Forum concluded with an emphasis on moving from conversation to collaboration, including mobility, internships, careers, school-university partnerships, future skills and an ongoing India-Thailand Education Network.



Campus Connect: Ashoka University recently conducted an interactive workshop session at Sancta Maria International School, bringing students together to explore the transformative power of interdisciplinary learning and strategic higher education planning. The session opened by anchoring participants in the foundational philosophy of liberal education and its immediate relevance in today's dynamic global landscape. Discussions centered on how interdisciplinary learning empowers students to explore a broad spectrum of academic interests before selecting a specialization, cultivating essential competencies like critical thinking, communication, analytical reasoning, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving.

Shifting focus to holistic university admissions, the conversation explores what institutions value beyond traditional academic metrics. Participants unpacked the strategic importance of leadership, community engagement, internships, research, competitions, and passion projects, emphasizing the need to select extracurricular activities that authentically align with a student's true aspirations. The discussion also offered practical roadmaps for pacing profile-building activities across Grades XI and XII while debunking common misconceptions and pitfalls students encounter along the way.

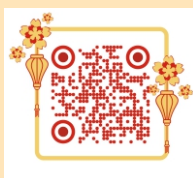


UPCOMING EVENTS

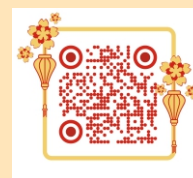
The Horizon Circle:
One Week Left to Register for
a Conversation with Beth Gelles



Futurowise: A 4-Week 1-on-1 Mentorship
Programme for Aspiring Global Essay
Competition Participants



Mirai BuildUp Winter Cohort:
Helping High School Students Discover
Careers Through Real-World Internships





Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

Decode the Professional: Are You Ready for the Real World?

Across healthcare, HR, and design, one lesson keeps emerging: professional readiness is about far more than knowledge. It is built through practical experience, adaptability, communication, judgment, initiative, and the courage to keep learning when things do not go according to plan.

Ready to find out how future-ready you really are?

Level 1: Spot the Real Skill

1. Which one does NOT belong in the toolkit of a future-ready professional?

- A. Adaptability
- B. Practical experience
- C. Memorising information without knowing how to apply it

2. Three young professionals are facing their first major workplace challenge. Who demonstrates the strongest professional mindset?

- A. The one who waits for detailed instructions before taking action.
- B. The one who takes initiative, asks questions, learns from feedback, and adjusts their approach.
- C. The one who avoids making mistakes by refusing to experiment.

Level 2: Can You Think Beyond the Classroom?

3. A student has excellent academic knowledge but has never worked with real-world tools, projects, or workplace situations. What is the biggest gap they need to address?

- A. They need to collect more qualifications before doing anything practical.
- B. They need opportunities to translate theoretical knowledge into practical experience.
- C. They should focus entirely on improving their grades first.

4. Hospitals are increasingly described as "systems under stress", short-staffed, overloaded, and running on exhausted people. What should students entering health professions understand before they graduate?

- A. The system's flaws are someone else's problem to fix later.
- B. Working harder alone will compensate for a strained system.
- C. Resilience, collaboration, and honest communication are what keep both patients and providers safe when the system is stretched thin.

5. A young trainee has excellent grades but struggles to say "I don't know" or ask for a second opinion. What does this cost the system?

- A. Nothing, confidence matters more than admitting uncertainty.
- B. It quietly erodes patient safety, since undetected gaps in knowledge are more dangerous than admitted ones.
- C. It only matters in extreme, rare cases.

Level 3: What Kind of Professional Are You Becoming?

6. An HR manager says that leadership is visible even without a leadership title. Which behaviour best supports this idea?

- A. Taking responsibility, supporting colleagues, seeking feedback, and continuously upgrading your skills.
- B. Waiting until you receive a formal leadership position before taking initiative.
- C. Avoiding mistakes by allowing others to make important decisions.

7. A designer's original idea fails repeatedly. Instead of abandoning the project, they experiment with new materials, alter the design, and learn from unexpected outcomes. What does this demonstrate?

- A. Failure is evidence that the original idea was not good enough.
- B. Creativity is primarily about getting the first idea right.
- C. Experimentation, iteration, and failure can be essential parts of the creative process.

The Orange Readiness Meter

How future-ready are you? Let's see where you land.

1-3 | Light Orange — The Knowledge Collector

You know the importance of learning, but you may still be thinking of education as something that happens primarily in classrooms. Your next challenge? Get closer to the real world. Internships, projects, experiments, conversations, and hands-on experiences can turn knowledge into capability.

4-6 | Bright Orange — The Emerging Professional

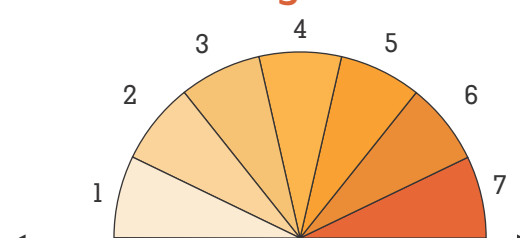
You're beginning to understand that being good at something is not just about knowing the theory. You recognise the importance of communication, initiative, adaptability, and practical experience. You're moving from "What do I know?" to "What can I do with what I know?"

7-8 | Deep Orange — The Future-Ready Thinker

You get the bigger picture. You know that careers rarely follow perfectly predictable paths, and real problems rarely come with answer keys. You're prepared to learn, experiment, communicate, question, adapt, and keep going when Plan A doesn't work. Knowledge gets you started. Readiness helps you make a difference.

Answers
Level 1:
1. C
2. B
Level 2:
3. B
4. C
5. B
Level 3:
6. A
7. C

The Orange Meter



Share your story via UCONNECT

We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

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