



UCD School of Mathematics and Statistics Colloquium Seminar

Title: The mathematics of solitaire

Speaker: Professor Persi Diaconis (Stanford University, USA)

Date: Tue 25th February 2025 at 2:00PM

Location: Room H1.51 Science Hub (O'Brien Centre), UCD

Abstract: It is one of the embarrassments of applied probability that we can't figure out the odds of 'ordinary solitaire' (Klondike—played by millions of people every day). We don't know the odds of winning, nor how to play well, nor how variations in the rules change things (!). Surely you say, in this computer age, alpha zero must be able to handle it. NOPE. I will say what we know and introduce 'simple solitaire' where a lot can be proved. These proofs involve some of the deepest tools of modern probability and yield results that apply to random matrices, the zeros of the Zeta function and the shape of a burning piece of paper. I will try to explain all this 'in English' to a general mathematical audience.

COFFEE MEETING: 15.00-16.00 on the 3rd floor of the O'Brien Centre atrium

If you plan to attend the colloquium and/or the coffee meeting, please complete this brief form below: <https://forms.gle/iHKpY6UybhBoLgz98>