



Overview

The TOK course is a flagship and compulsory element in the Diploma Programme which encourages critical thinking about knowledge itself to try to help young people make sense of what they encounter.

It consists of mainly questions about knowledge. The fundamental ones are: What counts as knowledge? How is knowledge produced? How do we acquire this knowledge? How reliable is this knowledge?

TOK encourages students to:

- reflect on things that they have previously taken for granted;
- critically re-evaluate previously trusted sources of information, the diverse ways of knowing and areas of knowledge;
- challenge previously held assumptions, prejudices and biases;
- become more aware of themselves as thinkers, the factors that have influenced their perspectives and the perspectives of others;
- become more internationally aware, more culturally sensitive and to take a fresh look at the world around them and see it in a way that they perhaps have not considered before;
- recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world.

TOK links academic subject areas as well as transcends them and demonstrates how students can apply their knowledge with greater awareness and credibility.

- Students do not learn new information but instead have lessons that consist of ideas and questions to be discussed;
- The course provides many opportunities for students to think, evaluate, share and discuss with fellow classmates to explore existing knowledge and discover new knowledge.

TOK Course Structure

The course comprises 3 closely connected parts:

1. **One compulsory 'core theme': Knowledge and the Knower**
2. **Five optional themes (select two):**
 - a. Knowledge and technology
 - b. Knowledge and language
 - c. Knowledge and indigenous societies
 - d. Knowledge and religion
 - e. Knowledge and politics

3. Five Areas of Knowledge (AOKS)

- a. The Arts
- b. Mathematics
- c. History
- d. The Human Sciences
- e. The Natural Sciences

TOK Assessment

There is no timed examination for TOK.

The Assessment comprises two parts, a TOK Exhibition and a TOK Essay.

TOK Exhibition

This is...

- a written exhibition commentary based on three objects
- internally assessed but moderated externally by the IB
- worth 33% of the total TOK score
- individual work only
- to be completed in the 1st year of the IBDP

TOK Essay

This is...

- an essay based on 1 of 6 prescribed titles
- externally assessed by the IB
- worth 67% of the total TOK score
- largely based on AOKs
- no more than 1600 words
- submitted towards the end of the 2nd year of IBDP

Some examples of prescribed essay titles from the November session:

1. Within an area of knowledge is it more important to have credibility or power? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.
2. If pushed too far, can open-mindedness itself become restrictive? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
3. Is it better to “have questions that can’t be answered than answers that can’t be questioned” (adapted from Richard Feynman)? Discuss with reference to mathematics and one other area of knowledge.
4. Why do we seek indisputable evidence when it is so often unattainable? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
5. To what extent do you agree with the directive to “measure what is measurable and make measurable what is not so” (Galileo Galilei)? Answer with reference to the human sciences and one other area of knowledge.
6. If the artist has freedom to interpret past events in ways that are denied to the historian, is this an asset or an obstacle to our understanding of the past? Discuss with reference to the arts and history.