

Theory of Knowledge

Course Overview 2022/2024

Outline of course

“The theory of knowledge (TOK) course plays a special role in the DP by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the nature, scope and limitations of knowledge and the process of knowing.

In this way, the main focus of TOK is not on students acquiring new knowledge but on helping students to reflect on, and put into perspective, what they already know.

TOK underpins and helps to unite the subjects that students encounter in the rest of their DP studies. It engages students in explicit reflection on how knowledge is arrived at in different disciplines and areas of knowledge, on what these areas have in common and the differences between them.”

From the [subject brief](#).

Aims

Students are enabled to:

1. to encourage students to reflect on the central question, “How do we know that?”, and to recognize the value of asking that question
2. to expose students to ambiguity, uncertainty and questions with multiple plausible answers
3. to equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world, and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations
4. to encourage students to be more aware of their own perspectives and to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions
5. to engage students with multiple perspectives, foster open-mindedness and develop intercultural understanding
6. to encourage students to make connections between academic disciplines by exploring
7. underlying concepts and by identifying similarities and differences in the methods of inquiry used in different areas of knowledge
8. to prompt students to consider the importance of values, responsibilities and ethical concerns relating to the production, acquisition, application and communication of knowledge.

Assessment objectives

Having completed the TOK course, students should be able to:

- demonstrate TOK thinking through the critical examination of knowledge questions
- identify and explore links between knowledge questions and the world around us
- identify and explore links between knowledge questions and areas of knowledge
- develop relevant, clear and coherent arguments
- use examples and evidence effectively to support a discussion
- demonstrate awareness and evaluation of different points of view
- consider the implications of arguments and conclusions.

Syllabus component

12 key TOK concepts

The 12 key concepts have been identified as being of particular importance to us in the TOK course. The 12 concepts are: certainty, culture, evidence, explanation, interpretation, justification, objectivity, perspective, power, responsibility, truth, and values.

Core theme: Knowledge and the knower

This theme provides an opportunity for students to reflect on themselves as knowers and thinkers, and on the different communities of knowers to which we belong.

Optional themes

Students are required to study **two** optional themes from the following five options.

- Knowledge and technology
- Knowledge and language
- Knowledge and politics
- Knowledge and religion
- Knowledge and indigenous societies

Areas of knowledge

Students are required to study the following five areas of knowledge.

- History
- The human sciences
- The natural sciences
- The arts
- Mathematics

Assessment outline

Students are required to complete two assessment tasks for TOK

1. Theory of knowledge exhibition
2. Theory of knowledge essay on a prescribed title

Assessment component

Internal assessment (8 hours) **33%: Theory of knowledge exhibition**

Students are required to create an exhibition of three objects with accompanying commentaries that explores how TOK manifests in the world around us. This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course.

External assessment (10 hours) **67: Theory of knowledge essay**

Students are required to write an essay in response to one of the six prescribed titles that are issued by the IB for each examination session. As an external assessment component, it is marked by IB examiners.

Assessment Criteria

Exhibition

| Does the exhibition successfully show how TOK manifests in the world around us? | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Excellent 9-10 | Good 7-8 | Satisfactory 5-6 | Basic 3-4 | Rudimentary 1-2 | 0 |
| <p>The exhibition clearly identifies three objects and their specific real-world contexts. Links between each of the three objects and the selected IA prompt are clearly made and well-explained.</p> <p>There is a strong justification of the particular contribution that each individual object makes to the exhibition. All or nearly all of the points are well-supported by appropriate evidence and explicit references back to the selected IA prompt.</p> | <p>The exhibition identifies three objects and their real-world contexts. Links between each of the three objects and the selected IA prompt are explained, although this explanation may lack precision and clarity in parts.</p> <p>There is a justification of the contribution that each individual object makes to the exhibition. Many of the points are supported by appropriate evidence and references back to the selected IA prompt.</p> | <p>The exhibition identifies three objects, although the real-world contexts of these objects may be vaguely or imprecisely stated. There is some explanation of the links between the three objects and the selected IA prompt.</p> <p>The student provides some justification for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. Some of the points are supported by evidence and references back to the selected IA prompt.</p> | <p>The exhibition identifies three objects, although the real-world contexts of the objects may be implied rather than explicitly stated. Basic links between the objects and the selected IA prompt are made, but the explanation of these links is unconvincing and/or unfocused.</p> <p>There is a superficial justification for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. Reasons for the inclusion of the objects are offered, but these are not supported by appropriate evidence and/or lack relevance to the prompt. There may be significant repetition across the justifications of the different objects.</p> | <p>The exhibition presents three objects, but the real-world contexts of these objects are not stated, or the images presented may be highly generic images of types of object rather than being specific real-world objects. Links between the objects and the selected IA prompt are made but these are minimal, tenuous, or it is not clear what the student is trying to convey.</p> <p>There is very little justification offered for the inclusion of each object in the exhibition. The commentary on the objects is highly descriptive or consists only of unsupported assertions.</p> | <p>The response does not reach the standard described by the other levels or does not use one of the IA prompts provided.</p> |

TOK Essay

| Does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title? | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| Excellent 9-10 | Good 7-8 | Satisfactory 5-6 | Basic 3-4 | Rudimentary 1-2 | 0 |
| <p>The discussion has a sustained focus on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are clear, coherent and effectively supported by specific examples. The implications of arguments are considered.</p> <p>There is clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view.</p> | <p>The discussion is focused on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are clear, coherent and supported by examples.</p> <p>There is awareness and some evaluation of different points of view.</p> | <p>The discussion is focused on the title and is developed with some links to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>Arguments are offered and are supported by examples.</p> <p>There is some awareness of different points of view.</p> | <p>The essay is connected to the title and makes superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge.</p> <p>The discussion is largely descriptive. Limited arguments are offered but they are unclear and are not supported by effective examples.</p> | <p>The discussion is weakly connected to the title.</p> <p>While there may be links to the areas of knowledge, any relevant points are descriptive or consist only of unsupported assertions.</p> | <p>The essay does not reach the standard described by the other levels or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles for the correct assessment session.</p> |
| Possible characteristics | | | | | |
| <p><i>Insightful</i> <i>Convincing</i> <i>Accomplished</i> <i>Lucid</i></p> | <p><i>Pertinent</i> <i>Relevant</i> <i>Analytical</i> <i>Organized</i></p> | <p><i>Acceptable</i> <i>Mainstream</i> <i>Adequate</i> <i>Competent</i></p> | <p><i>Underdeveloped</i> <i>Basic</i> <i>Superficial</i> <i>Limited</i></p> | <p><i>Ineffective</i> <i>Descriptive</i> <i>Incoherent</i> <i>Formless</i></p> | |