

# THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

## Course description

TOK plays a special role in the International Diploma Programme by asking students to reflect on how we know what we know. It is central to the IB philosophy and compulsory for all students like CAS and the extended essay.

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The aims of the TOK course include the ability to make interdisciplinary connections and to become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge including personal and ideological biases. How does it work?

### REFLECTION

- Students reflect on their experience as knowers and as learners

- Students make connections between academic disciplines

#### PERSPECTIVES

- Students appreciate the diversity of ways of thinking and living
- Students take an interest in individuals and communities

#### APPRECIATION

- Students develop a fascination with the richness of knowledge as a human endeavour
- Students understand the empowerment that follows from reflecting upon it

#### NUTS AND BOLTS

- Students develop awareness of how knowledge is acquired, critically examined and evaluated by communities and individuals
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#### RESPONSE

- Students place TOK in context of IB educational goals
- Students respect and appreciate cultural, political, religious, theoretical and other perspectives
- Students connect shared knowledge or personal knowledge with knowledge questions

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In the first year we explore ways of knowing and areas of knowledge. They are mathematics, the natural sciences, the human sciences, the arts, ethics, religious knowledge systems.

In the second year we will look at

The TOK course distinguishes between eight AOKs:

- mathematics
- natural sciences
- human sciences
- history
- the arts
- ethics
- religious knowledge systems
- indigenous knowledge systems.

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A successful TOK course

- Ensures that students understand and are prepared for assessment tasks;
- Has a structure that is clear to students;
- Is student centred
- Ensures that students understand the purpose of TOK and its central role in the DP;
- Encourages students continually to apply the TOK thinking skills process to discussions of examples, themes and areas of knowledge and ways of knowing;
- Allows the teacher model critical thinking, thoughtful enquiry and curiosity;
- Ensures that students are taught how to approach a TOK title.

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- To be involved in the classroom
- To have an enquiring mind

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Students will understand the purpose of TOK and its central role in the DP. Students will learn to prepare for assessment tasks and will build on their own experience and become independent thinker. Students will learn to appreciate the perspectives and values of others and will develop habits of mind that come from considering other perspectives. Students will learn how to write a TOK essay and how to unpack an essay title. Students will learn to formulate knowledge questions for their presentation.

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They are open questions about knowledge. They are open in the sense that there are a number of plausible answers to it. Knowledge questions are about knowledge and are not questions of knowledge themselves. They focus on ways of knowing and knowledge frameworks.

What is not a TOK knowledge question?

What is the atomic mass of Hydrogen? It is not a TOK knowledge question: it has a definite answer. What makes knowledge questions controversial is that they often depend crucially on the contested understanding of one or other key idea leaving room for disagreement.

Is Rembrandt a better painter than Maxfield Parrish? It is not a TOK knowledge question since it is not specifically about knowledge.

Knowledge questions in TOK:

What sort of knowledge, if any, is expressed by an artwork?

How can we know how reliable DNA evidence is in criminal trials?

What methods of advertising do advertisers use to manipulate the beliefs of consumers?

How do we know to what extent we can rely upon expert witnesses in murder trials?

Do non-rational elements help shape one's judgements of the reliability of others?

How could we know if it is right to give equal pay to male and female football stars given that there is more interest in the male game?

How could the claims of homeopathy be definitively tested?

What evidence establishes guilt 'beyond reasonable doubt' in a murder trial?

How can we assess the reliability of two historical accounts of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict?

To what extent is it legitimate to use statistical techniques to estimate population sizes of woodland insects?

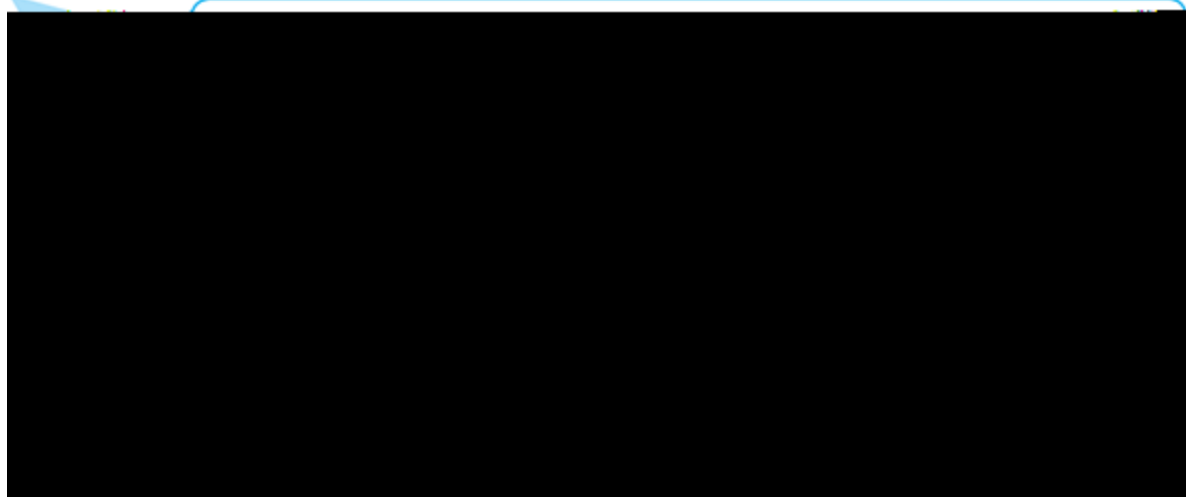
Possible presentation topics

- Items pertaining to the local community, school area or country which have practical consequences;  
How do we know the social benefits and disadvantages of building a new factory in the locality?
- Conflicts between two groups of a political, social, psychological or economic nature:  
What can be said about the role of values in the dispute? What are the strengths and weaknesses of different ways of knowing employed in the conflict?
- Sciences or arts: how can the truth of the knowledge claim be decided? Is there any weakness in the support of the claim?

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The course is assessed through an oral presentation and a 1 600 word essay

Students have to choose one essay title from a list of six 'prescribe titles' which are set by the IB.



MyIB and TSM

TOK presentation assessment instrument

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- Reflective: this is the essence of the TOK; the knower reflects on his/her own beliefs and examines his or her traditions;
  - Balanced: the TOK knower seeks a balance between thought and action, between verbal knowledge and practical experience.
  - Risk-taker: the TOK learner is an intellectual risk-taker: this means that she/he is prepared to take on the unknown and shows a readiness to learn and adapt to new and unfamiliar situations;
  - Caring: the TOK knower seeks to think in a way that takes into account the interests of others and of the environment around him/her.
  - Open-minded: The TOK learner appreciates the perspectives and values of groups other than her/his own and develops habits of mind that come from considering other perspectives.
  - Enquirers: Enquiry forces the learner to become an independent thinker.
  - Knowledgeable: The knower acquires a broad base of knowledge across the subject disciplines and in practical experience outside the classroom.
  - Thinkers: the knower seeks to be active, reasoning, creative and ethical in his/her decision-making.
  - Communicators: the knower realises that the enterprise of knowledge is often collaborative; there is a need for communicating and expressing ideas clearly.
  - Principled: the knower seeks to understand and respect others. He/she understands the meaning of ethical responsibilities and conduct.

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TOK, the EE and CAS are central to the IB philosophy and there are links and relationships between them. They are committed to the principle of developing the whole person and support the IB continuum of education and the learner profile. Opportunities will be given to students to have conversations with others from different backgrounds and different viewpoints, therefore challenging their own values.

Example of projects linking CAS and TOK: Mode United Nations

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Here are some examre 2019s12:JIT EMC /P AM090JIT EMC /P AMCID 10BDC ET EMC /PID 13u0k

- Own experience
- Examples from other disciplines
- Websites:

Spiked, Edge, Arts and Letters Daily, Science online, Ethics update for example.

**How is collaboration built at BISC?**

**How students' international-mindedness will develop?**

caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural  
particular, by TOK course and, in