

Curriculum Overview – Theory of Knowledge

Principles and Purpose of the Theory of Knowledge (ToK) Curriculum

From the IB:

What is the significance of ToK?

ToK aims to make students aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal ideological biases – whether these biases are retained, revised or rejected.

It offers students and their teachers the opportunity to:

- reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge
- consider the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others and in the wider world.

In addition, ToK prompts students to:

- be aware of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge
- recognise the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world.

ToK also provides coherence for the student, by linking academic subject areas as well as transcending them.

Here we explore these principles in the context of the Theory of Knowledge Curriculum:

- **Entitlement:** All IB Diploma students have the right and a requirement to study the Theory of Knowledge curriculum, which expose students to critical thinking and analytical skills that are applied to knowledge issues and knowledge questions.
- **Coherence:** The Theory of Knowledge curriculum is planned with carefully sequenced lessons and aims to prepare students for the ToK exhibition (Internal Assessment) through a study of the themes, and for the ToK essay (External Assessment) through a study of the Areas of Knowledge.
- **Mastery:** Students are expected to ‘get better’ at Theory of Knowledge as they progress through the curriculum. Students should be able to make links between issues and concepts covered, for example, in the core theme and areas of knowledge and apply their understanding to real-life situations.
- **Adaptability:** Students are expected to understand that ToK issues are often contestable and therefore consider knowledge issues from different perspectives. Furthermore, students may find that through their consideration of ToK issues they revise their original position or understanding.
- **Representation:** The Theory of Knowledge curriculum is planned with diversity and inclusion in mind.
- **Education with character:** Through exposure to Theory of Knowledge concepts and the development of ToK skills, students will develop their critical thinking skills when presented with information and knowledge in the world at large, rather than be passive or unquestioning recipients of it.

Roadmap of the Theory of Knowledge Curriculum

The roadmap diagram below sets out the route that we expect students to take through our curriculum.

Y12 Term 1.1	Y12 Term 1.2	Y12 Term 2.1	Y12 Term 2.2
Core Theme: knowledge and the knower	Optional Theme 1: knowledge and language	Optional Theme 2: knowledge and technology	Internal Assessment: the ToK exhibition Area of knowledge: history
Y12 Term 3.1	Y12 Term 3.2	Y13 Term 1.1	Y13 Term 1.2
Area of knowledge: the arts	Area of knowledge: mathematics	Area of knowledge: natural sciences	Area of knowledge: human sciences External assessment: the ToK essay (first draft)
Y13 Term 2.1	Y13 Term 2.2		
<i>[Mock exams]</i> External assessment: the ToK essay (final draft)	<i>ToK work marked and submitted to the IB by mid-March</i>		

‘Why This, Why Now?’

In our planning, we have asked ourselves 'why this, why now?'

Here we provide some examples of the curriculum choices we have made, and why the units have been placed in the order we have chosen:

Example 1 The first unit studied is the core theme (Knowledge and the knower) since this introduces students to the nature and approaches of Theory of Knowledge as well as some important ToK concepts, knowledge questions and the knowledge framework.

Example 2 The two optional themes are studied after the core theme to meet the recommendations from the IB that the ToK exhibition is based on the themes and completed during Year 12.

Example 3 The areas of knowledge are studied after the completion of the ToK exhibition and before the students write the ToK essay. The different areas of knowledge are covered in the sequence set out by the IB Theory of Knowledge guide.

Teaching the Theory of Knowledge Curriculum

The Theory of Knowledge curriculum has been planned around the Rosenshine principles. Effective teachers will use the I/We/You approach in lessons, with teacher explanation and modelling being at the heart of the presentation of new information. Students will then have opportunities for guided practice on tasks before moving onto independent work. By following this model, we believe that we can best support students and carefully plan how to avoid misconceptions in our delivery. The Theory of Knowledge curriculum also includes approaches that correspond with the IB learner profile, and in particular encourages students to develop the skills of inquiry, thinking, communication, and being open-minded, balanced and reflective.

So, when we walk into a Theory of Knowledge lesson, what should we expect to see?

- A 'do now' exercise recapping key ideas from the previous lesson or sequence of lessons.
- The introduction of a new Theory of Knowledge concept or knowledge issue.
- The application of this concept or knowledge issue to elements relating to the respective theme, area of knowledge, or the students' own learning experiences. This may be done through discussion ('turn and talk'), or an activity or exercise.
- The use of mini-whiteboards and 'cold calling' to assess student learning and understanding.
- The issuing of home study reading to reinforce and in some cases extend the ideas covered in the lesson.

Assessing the Theory of Knowledge Curriculum

Formative Assessment in Theory of Knowledge

Students will be assessed through low-stakes assessment tasks such as 'do now' tasks and lesson reviews using the mini-whiteboards, as well as through the completion of exercises and verbal contributions to lessons. Teachers should use these forms of assessment to spot gaps in student knowledge and re-teach where necessary.

Summative Assessment in Theory of Knowledge

Students are given chances to practice selecting objects for the ToK exhibition and writing a commentary and writing ToK essays. These are marked according to the IB marking criteria.

Progression in the Theory of Knowledge Curriculum

Progression to University and Careers

Theory of Knowledge, in conjunction with the Extended Essay, is awarded up to 3 additional points of the diploma programme. Universities and employers will hopefully understand and recognise the critical thinking and analytical skills developed by the students from having completed the course, which can be transferred to a range of degree courses and professions.