

Summary

Scope Current



Subject	Year	Start date	Duration
Theory of Knowledge	IB1	Week 3, April	7 weeks 14 hours

Course Part

Knowledge framework - scope of knowledge within various areas of knowledge

Description

You have been gaining knowledge all your life. You speak at least one language, know your family and friends, know how to find your way around, and in your school courses you learn deliberately with a focus on succeeding in your examinations. You probably hook yourself up to the internet or a mobile / cell phone signal with scarcely a thought, and connect instantly with a larger world. Before starting out on the Theory of knowledge course, you had amassed a huge amount of knowledge already and fully intend to learn much more.

But for now, take a moment to pause. Before you hurtle further down the educational track, it is time to think about what you are hoping to get out of all this learning. It is time to question what knowledge is, why it matters, and what you might want to gain from it, or contribute to it, yourself.

Inquiry & Purpose

? Inquiry / Higher Order Questions

Type

Inquiry Questions

Debatable

What are your favourite IB subjects? Why? What do you need to know to work well with other people? Do you know how to dance or how to play any sports? Is that knowledge different from what you gain in an IB classroom? Are you involved in the arts – visual

Curriculum

🎯 Aims

The aims of the TOK course are:

to equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world, and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations

to encourage students to make connections between academic disciplines by exploring underlying concepts and by identifying similarities and differences in the methods of inquiry used in different areas of knowledge

to prompt students to consider the importance of values, responsibilities and ethical concerns relating to the production, acquisition, application and communication of knowledge.

◇ Objectives

First Assessment 2015

demonstrate an awareness and understanding of different perspectives and be able to relate these to one's own perspective

First Assessment 2022

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

identify and explore links between knowledge questions and the world around us

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 Content

Core theme: Knowledge and the knower

This theme encourages careful and critical consideration of claims, provoking students to reflect on how we distinguish between claims that are contestable and claims that are not. It highlights the importance of not simply accepting claims at face value, and then explores how this can be reconciled with a recognition that many situations require us to make decisions without possessing absolute certainty.

Scope

What criteria can we use to distinguish between knowledge, belief and opinion?

How do we distinguish claims that are contestable from claims that are not?

Are there situations where “knowing how” is more important than “knowing that”?

Why should we care about acquiring knowledge?

Why are the criteria for what counts as knowledge not obvious?

Can other people know us better than we know ourselves?

How do our interactions with the material world shape our knowledge?

Area of knowledge - History

Students could also consider why some might claim that there is always a subjective element in historical writing because historians are influenced by the historical and social environment in which they are writing—which unavoidably affects their selection and interpretation of evidence.

An interesting focus for discussions could be the concept of historical significance. For example, students could consider why particular aspects of history have been recorded and preserved whereas others have been lost or excluded from historical accounts.

Scope

Is it possible to have knowledge of the past?

Is knowledge about the past different from other kinds of knowledge?

Are all areas of knowledge concerned with knowledge of the past to some extent?

Why does history enjoy a privileged position as its own dedicated area of knowledge in the TOK curriculum?

Is all knowledge in some sense historical knowledge?

Is truth the goal of all historical inquiry?

Is certainty about the past more difficult to attain than certainty about the present or the future?

What counts as a fact in history?

Area of knowledge - The human sciences

The human sciences include a diverse range of disciplines, such as psychology, social and cultural anthropology, economics, political science, and geography. These disciplines share a common focus on the study of human existence and behaviour.

The diversity of the disciplines included within the human sciences can itself be a stimulus for interesting TOK discussions, as can the coexistence of different approaches within a single discipline (for example psychodynamic versus behaviourist versus humanistic approaches in psychology).

Scope

How do we decide whether a particular discipline should be regarded as a human science?

Do the human sciences and literature provide different types of knowledge about human existence and behaviour?

Are predictions in the human sciences inevitably unreliable?

What are the main difficulties that human scientists encounter when trying to provide explanations of human behaviour?

Is human behaviour too unpredictable to study scientifically?

Do the boundaries between different disciplines and different areas of knowledge help or hinder understanding?

Is it possible to discover laws of human behaviour in the same way that the natural sciences discover laws of nature?

Area of knowledge - The natural sciences

The natural sciences are often seen to rely on evidence, rationality and the quest for deeper understanding. Observation and experimentation play a key role, and terms such as “theory” have a special meaning in the natural sciences compared to how they are used in daily life and in other areas of knowledge.

A focus for discussions of the natural sciences could be what differentiates the scientific from the non-scientific or “pseudo-scientific”. Many people would suggest that it is the methods used in the natural sciences that is the key distinguishing factor—which raises the question of what it is about these methods that means that the knowledge they generate is often regarded as being highly reliable.

Scope

Why might some people regard science as the supreme form of all knowledge?

Should the natural sciences be regarded as a body of knowledge, a system of knowledge or a method?

Could there be scientific problems that are currently unknown because the technology needed to reveal them doesn't exist yet?

Is human knowledge confined to what the natural sciences discover, or are there other important inquiries that are not covered by the natural sciences?

What knowledge, if any, is likely to always remain beyond the capabilities of science to investigate or verify?

Do the natural sciences rely on any assumptions that are themselves unprovable by science?

Is prediction the primary purpose of scientific knowledge?

How might developments in scientific knowledge trigger political controversies or controversies in other areas of knowledge?

Area of knowledge - The arts

“The arts” is used in TOK to include a diverse range of disciplines such as visual arts, theatre, dance, music, film and literature. The forms and methods of these disciplines are often dissimilar, so the diversity within this single area of knowledge can itself be an excellent stimulus for TOK discussions.

The arts provide rich material for discussions of concepts such as interpretation. For example, students could consider how we ascribe meaning to works of art, or whether the intention of the artist is what determines meaning.

Scope

Do the disciplines in the arts diverge from one another more fundamentally than disciplines within other areas of knowledge?

Does new knowledge in the arts always build on what is already known?

How have new technologies changed the nature and scope of the arts as an area of knowledge?

Are the arts best seen as a system of knowledge, a type of knowledge or a means of expressing knowledge?

Is artistic knowledge something that cannot be expressed in any other way?

Is the relationship between “knowing how” and “knowing that” different in the arts compared to other areas of knowledge? Does art enlarge what it is possible for us to think and know?

Area of knowledge - Mathematics

Mathematics is sometimes seen to have a degree of certainty that is unmatched by other areas of knowledge or is seen to be founded on a set of more or less universally accepted definitions and basic assumptions. This makes mathematics an excellent source of material for TOK discussions.

One interesting focus for discussions could be the status of mathematics as an area of knowledge. Students could consider why disciplines in the human sciences are often keen to cast their conclusions in mathematical terms, or why mathematical treatments of a topic are often taken by many to be a sign of intellectual rigour. They could also consider why mathematics is often given a privileged position in many education systems.

Scope

Why is mathematics so important in other areas of knowledge, particularly the natural sciences?

How have technological innovations, such as developments in computing, affected the scope and nature of mathematics as an area of knowledge?

Is absolute certainty attainable in mathematics?

Is there a distinction between truth and certainty in mathematics?

Should mathematics be defined as a language?

Is mathematics better defined by its subject matter or its method?

Does mathematics only yield knowledge about the real world when it is combined with other areas of knowledge?

IB DP TOK class of 2022 VIM (IB1)

Is there a hierarchy of areas of knowledge in terms of their usefulness in solving problems?

ATL Skills

Approaches to Learning

Thinking

- In this unit, we will

give students time to think through their answers before asking them for a response

ask open questions

set students a task which required higher-order thinking skills (such as analysis or evaluation)


build on a specific prior task

require students to take an unfamiliar viewpoint into account when formulating arguments


include a reflection activity

Developing IB Learners

Learner Profile

 Inquirers

 Open-minded

 Balanced