

## Theory of Knowledge

The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) requirement is central to the educational philosophy of the Diploma Programme. It offers students and their teachers the opportunity to reflect critically on diverse ways of knowing and on areas of knowledge, and to consider the role and nature of knowledge in their own culture, in the cultures of others and in the wider world. It prompts students' awareness of themselves as thinkers, encouraging them to become more acquainted with the complexity of knowledge and to recognize the need to act responsibly in an increasingly interconnected but uncertain world.

As a thoughtful and purposeful inquiry into different ways of knowing, and into different kinds of knowledge, TOK is composed almost entirely of questions. The most central of these questions is "How do we know?" The critical reflection encouraged in students is a foundation for developing international awareness.

All Diploma Programme subjects aim to encourage in all students an appreciation and understanding of cultures and attitudes other than their own, but in this particular respect, TOK has a special role to play. It is a stated aim of TOK that students should become aware of the interpretative nature of knowledge, including personal and ideological biases, regardless of whether, ultimately, these biases are retained, revised or rejected.

### Programme outline

- 1) The role of perception, language, reason and emotion in knowledge.
- 2) The requirements of logical rigour for knowledge.
- 3) Different systems of knowledge - social science, history, natural science and mathematics.
- 4) Value judgements as knowledge - moral, political and aesthetic judgement.
- 5) The concepts of Knowledge and Truth.

The IB combines the Theory of Knowledge assessment with that of the Extended Essay to award up to three bonus points for the Diploma.

### The Extended Essay

A required component of the full Diploma Programme, the extended essay is an independent, self-directed piece of research, culminating in a 4,000-word paper. It is given much importance by students, teachers and universities, because it provides practical preparation for the kinds of undergraduate research required at tertiary level. From the choice of a suitable research question, to the final completion of the extended essay, students must produce their piece within the constraints of time, essay length and available resources. This component provides an opportunity to engage in an in-depth study of a topic of interest within a chosen subject.

Emphasis is placed on the research process, on the appropriate formulation of a research question, on personal engagement in the exploration of the topic, and on communication of ideas and development of argument. It develops the capacity to analyse, synthesize and evaluate knowledge, with a personal choice of topic from within any subject area. Students are supported and encouraged throughout the research and writing with advice and guidance from a supervisor.