

ISWA-TOK Course Outline.

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TOK Within the Diploma

Although students are free to choose subjects throughout the Diploma Programme, they must all study the Theory of Knowledge. TOK does not operate at higher and standard level. All students study TOK in the same depth and for the number of hours. TOK is compulsory for all students because it is the point at which students are invited to draw links between different areas of knowledge. One purpose of TOK is to enable students to step outside of the pigeon-hole understanding that so many of us have of academic disciplines. By inviting students to explore the relation between mathematics and musical harmony, the role of art in defining history, or the correlation between abstraction in art and physics, we enable them to see the extent to which academic borders only serve to define different approaches to similar knowledge questions.

TOK also enables students to develop their ability to function as critically minded thinkers, who appreciate the extent to which their own thinking is largely a product of the era and culture that they were raised in. These are qualities and understandings that the Diploma programme identifies as a prerequisite to lifelong learning, as well as being one that is essential to the overall ethos of the Diploma Programme. It is for this reason that the TOK programme is always situated in the center of the Diploma Matrix. Rather than being a course within the programme, it is the course that links the programme together.

Nature of the Course:

The Theory of Knowledge programme at ISWA is a compulsory part of the Diploma Programme. All Diploma and Certificate students are required to complete one hundred and fifty hours of Theory of Knowledge. The course that is offered at ISWA is spread across the two years of the Diploma Programme. Students are assessed on the basis of written submissions and oral presentations, over the length of the course. Whilst all of these are employed to provide feedback and to establish internal grades, each student's final grade for TOK is based on their performance for two tasks, the oral presentation and the written essay. Forty percent of each candidate's final grade is based on the grade that they receive for a ten minute Theory of Knowledge presentation. The remaining sixty percent of each student's grade is derived from a prepared essay which is externally graded. Each student will submit a 1200 and 1600 response, to one of that year's ten theory of Knowledge titles.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the Theory of Knowledge Programme is twofold. Initially, it provides students with opportunities to draw points of comparison between distinct points in their Diploma course. The TOK course challenges much of the pigeon-holing that often typifies Secondary Education. Through their study of TOK students are led to recognise the interplay that exists between different subject areas. As a consequence of this they

are likely to see the distinctions between subjects as being more arbitrary than they had previously considered them to be. The second aim of the course is to equip students with the effective critical thinking skills that will prove so crucial to their lifelong learning. Although the TOK course does employ different philosophical views, it is not a philosophy course and should not be taught as such.

Course Schedule:

Each candidate at ISWA is presented with a breakdown of the entire TOK course, prior to commencement. Students are then able to use this breakdown to determine the order that different sections of the course will be dealt with. The course outline also allows students to determine where internal and external assessment will fall across the course.

The lengthy preparation periods for both the external assessments can often pose a trap for disorganised students. For this reason it is crucial that lengthier, and more significant tasks, are broken down into work in progress submission dates.

TOK Diagram:

The Theory of Knowledge diagram provides candidates with a perspective of themselves in relation to the course. At the center of the diagram is the student who, for the purpose of the discussion is referred to as the knower. The center ring of the diagram depicts the **Ways of Knowing**. These are the **filters** through which we, **the knower**, interpret all of our information. Because these filters are so central to the course they are studied independently but also as part of each of the areas of knowledge. The six areas of knowledge that feature in the outer circle represent different **Areas of Knowledge** that much of each student's Diploma course is based upon. As well as studying the impact of the filters of knowledge, the course will draw links between different areas of knowledge. Student's may, for example explore the mathematics of beauty, or the ethical axioms that govern the stem-cell research.

Ways of Knowing:

A key understanding in all Theory of Knowledge courses is the recognition that our thinking process must, at some point rely on at least two of the filters tabled. Thus, if we are to be aware of the factors that govern our thinking we must begin by acknowledging, for example, that our exploration of a new topic will invariably be governed by other previous experiences. Once we begin to make ourselves aware of our inherent biases, we begin the process of making ourselves aware of how we, and others, go about the process of thinking

Knowledge Areas.

As we progress through our study of each of these subject areas, we engage with the course in two different ways. In the first case we focus on the effect that each of the ways of Knowing may have on our interpretation of that Area. For example, we may explore the role that physical representation of information (Language) i.e. graphs and maps plays in simplifying pacifying far more complex issues. In the second instance we focus on the interplay that exists between knowledge Areas, outside of schools. In this

instance the role of Art as a medium for conveying history would make for a perfectly sensible way of exploring the links that naturally exist between Art and History.

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Evaluation

Completion of the Theory of Knowledge course is a prerequisite for all Diploma and Certificate candidates. It is also often a prerequisite school certificate. Each student must have completed **one hundred and fifty hours** of study, and each must have completed a **ten minute TOK presentation and a 1200-1600 word response** to one of the TOK titles assigned by the IBO to that year group.

TOK Essay Response.

Each student's total grade for the course is arrived at by combining the scores for those two tasks.

The TOK Essay response must demonstrate that each student is able to apply their understanding of the course to a 1200-1600 word response to one of that year's prescribed titles. The prescribed titles are circulated by October of the Grade eleven course, allowing each student as much as fifteen months to develop their response as a work in progress. This process often leads students to conducting additional research, liaising with specific department teachers and even seeking expert advice from professionals with expertise in that particular subject. **The Essay from a prescribed title accounts for 60% of the student's final TOK grade** and it is externally graded.

The Oral Presentation is usually conducted mid-way through the grade twelve course, and is based on a thesis selected by the individual student. Although many students do base their presentations on prescribed titles from previous years, it is not mandatory for them to do so. Many students choose to construct their own statements, and use them to focus on aspects of the course that they sought to explore in greater depth. **The TOK Oral Presentation is graded internally and accounts for 40% of each student's final TOK grade.**

Internal assessment.

Internal assessments are conducted over the course of the programme. As well as providing students with an understanding of their progress, these tasks also provide students with opportunities to experiment with preliminary versions of the assignments that they will eventually be graded on, as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate each of those tasks.

The Diploma Points Matrix

The ultimate score available to Diploma students is forty-five points. Three of those points are established by combining the aggregate of each student's grade for TOK and the Extended Essay. It is crucial for students to be fully aware that the three additional points, provided by this combination, often represents the difference between attending or not attending that student's first choice university