

- **Theory of knowledge (TOK)**

TOK plays a special role in the Diploma Programme by providing an opportunity for students to reflect on the nature of knowledge, and on how we know what we claim to know.

The fundamental question of TOK is “how do we know that?” Students are encouraged to think about how knowledge is arrived at in different disciplines, what the disciplines have in common and the differences between the disciplinary. TOK therefore both supports and is supported by the study of other DP subjects, as students are required to explore knowledge questions against the backdrop of their experiences in their other DP subjects. Discussion and critical reflection form the backbone of the TOK course, centring around discussions of questions such as:

- what counts as evidence for X?
- what makes a good explanation in subject Y?
- how do we judge which is the best model of Z?
- how can we be sure of W?
- what does theory T mean in the real world?
- how do we know whether it is right to do S?

Through discussions of these types of questions students gain greater awareness of their personal and ideological assumptions, as well as developing an appreciation of the diversity and richness of cultural perspectives. The TOK course is assessed through an oral presentation and a 1600 word essay. The TOK presentation assesses the ability of the student to apply TOK thinking to a real-life situation, while the TOK essay takes a more conceptual starting point; for example asking students to discuss the claim that the methodologies used to produce knowledge depend on the use to which that knowledge will be used.

TOK is a demanding and challenging course, but one which plays a crucial role in effectively preparing students for the complex and rapidly changing world they will encounter both during their DP experience and beyond.