

Inquiry: Establishing the purpose of the unit

The “Inquiry” section of the MYP unit planner identifies the purpose of the unit to ensure its alignment with MYP philosophy and requirements. The components of this section of the MYP unit planner are: concepts, global contexts, statement of inquiry, inquiry questions, subject-group objectives, summative assessment and ATL.

Concepts

Key concepts

The MYP identifies 16 key concepts to be explored across the curriculum. These key concepts, shown in Table 2, represent understandings that reach beyond the eight MYP subject groups from which they are drawn.

Aesthetics	Change	Communication	Communities
Connections	Creativity	Culture	Development
Form	Global interactions	Identity	Logic
Perspective	Relationships	Time, place and space	Systems

Table 2
MYP key concepts

Teachers use key concepts from their own subject group(s)—as well as key concepts from other subject groups—to plan disciplinary and interdisciplinary units of inquiry. Teachers identify one key concept that drives the unit’s development.

The following broad descriptions apply across subject groups, and MYP subject guides suggest further subject-specific understandings. These concepts are not only “key” in the sense of being important; they also provide a key—a way into a body of knowledge through structured and sustained inquiry. They place no limits on breadth of knowledge or on depth of understanding, and therefore provide access to every student, regardless of individual aptitudes and abilities.

Inquiry into MYP key concepts will further develop (and lead to debate on) the meaning of these significant ideas.

- *Aesthetics* deals with the characteristics, creation, meaning and perception of beauty and taste. The study of aesthetics develops skills for the critical appreciation and analysis of art, culture and nature.
- *Change* is a conversion, transformation or movement from one form, state or value to another. Inquiry into the concept of change involves understanding and evaluating causes, processes and consequences.
- *Communication* is the exchange or transfer of signals, facts, ideas and symbols. It requires a sender, a message and an intended receiver. Communication involves the activity of conveying information or meaning. Effective communication requires a common “language” (which may be written, spoken or non-verbal).

- *Communities* are groups that exist in proximity defined by space, time or relationship. Communities include, for example, groups of people sharing particular characteristics, beliefs or values as well as groups of interdependent organisms living together in a specific habitat.
- *Connections* are links, bonds and relationships among people, objects, organisms or ideas.
- *Creativity* is the process of generating novel ideas and considering existing ideas from new perspectives. Creativity includes the ability to recognize the value of ideas when developing innovative responses to problems; it may be evident in process as well as outcomes, products or solutions.
- *Culture* encompasses a range of learned and shared beliefs, values, interests, attitudes, products, ways of knowing and patterns of behaviour created by human communities. The concept of culture is dynamic and organic.
- *Development* is the act or process of growth, progress or evolution, sometimes through iterative improvements.
- *Form* is the shape and underlying structure of an entity or piece of work, including its organization, essential nature and external appearance.
- *Global interactions*, as a concept, focuses on the connections among individuals and communities, as well as their relationships with built and natural environments, from the perspective of the world as a whole.
- *Identity* is the state or fact of being the same. It refers to the particular features that define individuals, groups, things, eras, places, symbols and styles. Identity can be observed, or it can be constructed, asserted and shaped by external and internal influences.
- *Logic* is a method of reasoning and a system of principles used to build arguments and reach conclusions.
- *Perspective* is the position from which we observe situations, objects, facts, ideas and opinions. Perspective may be associated with individuals, groups, cultures or disciplines. Different perspectives often lead to multiple representations and interpretations.
- *Relationships* are the connections and associations between properties, objects, people and ideas—including the human community's connections with the world in which we live. Any change in relationship brings consequences—some of which may occur on a small scale, while others may be far-reaching, affecting large networks and systems such as human societies and the planetary ecosystem.
- The intrinsically linked concept of *time, space and place* refers to the absolute or relative position of people, objects and ideas. Time, place and space focuses on how we construct and use our understanding of location (“where” and “when”).
- *Systems* are sets of interacting or interdependent components. Systems provide structure and order in human, natural and built environments. Systems can be static or dynamic, simple or complex.

Related concepts

Related concepts and their definitions are found in each MYP subject guide, along with examples of how they are used to develop MYP units. Teachers can develop additional related concepts to meet the needs of students and local or national curriculum requirements. For each unit, teachers identify one or more related concept that extend(s) learning, lead(s) to deeper understanding, or offer(s) another perspective from which to understand the identified key concept(s).