

MYP Key Concepts

The MYP identifies 16 key concepts to be explored across the curriculum. These key concepts, shown in the table below represent understandings that reach beyond the eighth 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

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.

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. The following are definitions for the 16 key concepts used for inquiry in the MYP.

- **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.

MYP Related Concepts

Related concepts promote depth of learning and add coherence to the understanding of academic subjects and disciplines. They are grounded in specific subjects and disciplines and they are useful for exploring key concepts in greater detail. Inquiry into related concepts helps students to develop more complex and sophisticated conceptual understanding. Related concepts may arise from the subject matter of a unit or the craft of a subject—its features and processes.

For each unit, teachers identify two or more related concepts that extend learning, lead to deeper understanding, or offer another perspective from which to understand the identified key concept(s). Related concepts can have different levels of abstraction and disciplinary specificity (Erickson 2008).

Key concepts can function like related concepts. For example, in a unit entitled “Balance in complex organisms requires the effective interaction of systems”, the related concepts balance and interaction bring disciplinary depth to the key concept of systems—and also deepen understanding of the subject. The following are the related concepts for each MYP subject area.

Language & Literature

Audience Imperatives	Character	Context	Genres
Intertextuality	Point of view	Purpose	Self-expression
Setting	Structure	Style	Theme

Language Acquisition

Phases 1-2

Accent	Audience	Context	Conventions
Form	Function	Meaning	Message
Patterns	Purpose	Structure	Word choice

Phases 3-4

Accent	Context	Conventions	Empathy
Function	Idiom	Meaning	Message
Points of view	Purpose	Structure	Word choice

Phases 5-6

Argument	Audience	Bias	Context
Empathy	Idiom	Inference	Point of view
Purpose	Stylistic choices	Theme	Voice

Individuals & Societies

Economics

Choice	Consumption	Equity	Globalization
Growth	Model	Poverty	Power
Resources	Scarcity	Sustainability	Trade

Geography

Causality (cause & consequence)	Culture	Disparity & equity	Diversity
Globalization	Management & intervention	Networks	Patterns & trends
Power	Processes	Scale	Sustainability

History

Causality (cause & consequence)	Civilization	Conflict	Cooperation
Culture	Governance	Identity	Ideology
Innovation & revolution	Interdependence	Perspective	Significance

Integrated Humanities (Economics, Geography & History)

Causality (cause & consequence)	Choice	Culture	Equity
Globalization	Identity	Innovation & revolution	Perspective
Power	Processes	Resources	Sustainability

Sciences

Biology

Balance	Consequences	Energy	Environment
Evidence	Form	Function	Interaction
Models	Movement	Patterns	Transformation

Chemistry

Balance	Conditions	Consequences	Energy
Evidence	Form	Function	Interaction
Models	Movement	Patterns	Transfer

Physics

Consequences	Development	Energy	Environment
Evidence	Form	Function	Interaction
Models	Movement	Patterns	Transformation

Integrated Sciences

Balance	Consequences	Energy	Environment
Evidence	Form	Function	Interaction
Models	Movement	Patterns	Transformation

Mathematics

Change	Equivalence	Generalization	Justification
Measurement	Models	Patterns	Quantity
Representation	Simplification	Space	System

Arts

Visual Arts

Audience	Boundaries	Composition	Expression
Genre	Innovation	Interpretation	Narrative
Presentation	Representation	Style	Visual culture

Performing Arts

Audience	Boundaries	Composition	Expression
Genre	Innovation	Interpretation	Narrative
Play	Representation	Role	Structure

Physical & Health Education

Adaptation	Balance	Choice	Energy
Environment	Function	Interaction	Movement
Perspectives	Refinement	Space	Systems

Design

Adaptation	Collaboration	Ergonomics	Evaluation
Form	Function	Innovation	Invention
Markets & Trends	Perspective	Resources	Sustainability