

Human sciences

To what extent are the human sciences reliable? Can human behaviour be subject to laws in the same way as the material world? What constitutes good evidence in the human sciences?

In TOK, the term "human sciences" includes many of the subjects in group 3 (individuals and societies) in the Diploma Programme. In simple terms, the human sciences study the reality of being human. More specifically, the human sciences study the social, cultural and biological aspects of human existence. If we add the study of human behaviour to this definition then the Diploma Programme offerings cover a range of human sciences including psychology, social and cultural anthropology, economics and geography.

A fundamental difference between human sciences and natural sciences is in the interpretation of the word "science". The human sciences might be classified as science because they use the scientific method to test the validity and reliability of hypotheses. However, unlike the natural sciences, the phenomena they try to explain might not possess hard and fast laws that admit no exceptions. They might therefore resort to statistical methods to establish their findings, producing knowledge that is less reliable in terms of issuing predictions.



