



Evaluating MYP unit planners



Middle Years Programme
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Introduction

These rubrics have been developed as guidance for teachers who are developing MYP units of work. *MYP: From principles into practice* (August 2008) states that schools that do not choose to use the MYP unit planner must use the processes of planning inherent in it.

Therefore, these rubrics will apply to **all** unit planners in MYP schools.

The planning stages

The MYP unit planner is made up of three parts.

- Stage 1 which is derived from the content
- Stage 2 which is content-specific
- Reflective stage which encompasses stage 1 and stage 2 and applies for the duration of teaching the planner and extends beyond

The following rubrics apply to stage 1 of the planner.

Rubrics for stage 1

This stage can be summed up as the integration of the specific key elements of creating MYP units of work, which always includes the following four steps:

- choosing a significant concept for the unit
- determining an area of interaction focus
- developing an MYP unit question that is specifically appropriate to the developmental age of the students
- determining a level of achievement using the process of summative assessment, addressing the MYP objectives listed in stage 2 of the planner.

Stage 1 ensures that units are in line with MYP philosophy and requirements; the stage is derived from subject-specific content.

Significant concept

The significant concept can also be considered the big idea of the unit. Upon consideration of the subject-specific content and concepts to be taught in an MYP unit, it is very likely that one big idea or concept will emerge.

The significant concept is usually a “real-life concept” and will be written as a statement. Examples are:

- “Communication is at the heart of relationships.” (Language A)
- “Signs tell us where to go.” (Mathematics)

Indeed, since the significant concept is a “real-life concept”, teachers will more readily be able to determine the **one** area of interaction for the unit that could be considered the “best fit”.

In both these examples, each significant concept stems from the subject-specific concepts to be taught. When developing a unit, a teacher will start by considering all the concepts that will be taught. By listing these concepts, teachers will be able to identify one that is the most significant. This will then become the significant concept or big idea for the unit and will be written as a statement, as demonstrated by the examples above.

Significant concepts transcend the subject and could possibly be used in other subjects, making this the authentic “interdisciplinary connection” of an MYP unit of study. This process provides opportunity for another subject area teacher to collaborate more easily in the creation of an interdisciplinary unit.

Descriptor	Level
The significant concept statement fails to identify a big idea, rather it identifies other aspects of learning such as knowledge, skills or attitudes .	0
The significant concept of the unit is apparent only on close analysis of the concept statement, although other aspects of learning such as skills or knowledge are included. It is subject-specific .	1
The significant concept of the unit is included within a concept statement, although it could not be considered a real-life concept . It could only apply to a single subject and its use in other subjects would not be appropriate.	2
The significant concept of the unit is clearly identified as a real-life concept and is written as a concise statement . The concept could apply to more than one subject .	3

The areas of interaction

The areas of interaction provide the contexts for learning; they are the ways in which the unit's content will interact with the "real world". *MYP: From principles into practice* (August 2008) states that teachers should choose one area of interaction for each unit. Approaches to learning skills are present in all units, therefore, the area of interaction focus should be drawn from one of the other four.

From experience of working with the planner, MYP practitioners have found that the clearer the unit's significant concept is, in terms of transcending specific content, the more easily connections can be made between the significant concept and the chosen area of interaction (the context for learning).

Once the area of interaction has been determined, its focus must be stated. This is an explicit indication of how the area of interaction will guide both teacher and student inquiry using the significant concept to make the actual subject content of the unit relevant to students.

Descriptor	Level
There is little or no attempt to show how student learning can be enhanced by the integration of any area of interaction.	0
More than one area of interaction is identified. These provide little more than "links" to the unit's concept that is content-laden . Multiple directions are implied—or some ideas are provided—for student inquiry, although these may have little relevance to the significant concept.	1
One area of interaction is stated and it may be approaches to learning. There is a weak connection that can be made with the identified concept. There is an attempt to show how teachers and students might use the area for inquiry, although the connections might not be clear .	2
One area of interaction (not approaches to learning) is explicitly stated and forms the context of the entire unit . It has clear and close connections with the identified significant concept/big idea. The area of interaction focus guides both teacher and student inquiry into the significant concept/big idea in a real-world context.	3

MYP unit question

The MYP unit question is the significant concept statement reworked in the form of a student-centred question; it specifically engages students, bringing a real-world context to their learning.

The question will need to be developed so that it satisfies the criteria proposed in the guide *MYP: From principles into practice* (August 2008) in the section "Planning for teaching and learning".

Use a best-fit approach to the rubric below in determining a level.

Open-ended	Relevant and engaging	Challenging and provocative	Significant	Level
The question:	The question:	The question:	The question:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is "closed", requiring a yes/no response (typical questions start with "can", "does", "should", "do", "will"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not provide for student involvement fails to interest students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not seek to extend students' capacities for new understandings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is irrelevant to students' lives. 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is content-specific presumes that the answer could be known in advance, looked up or easily derived without serious thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is isolated from students' prior knowledge and experience is phrased in adult language and adult thinking provides for little student interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides few opportunities for students to develop their understandings or skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires a response based on factual recall or the simple stating of an opinion that has little depth is teacher-centred or text-centred has little relevance to students' lives. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is not content-specific requires a response that is likely to be the same from student to student has boundaries set by the teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attempts to make connections to students' prior learning is a "simplified" version of an "adult question" requires some student involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seeks a limited extension of student knowledge and understanding provides some opportunities for students to increase their understandings and competencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> suggests or hints at a real-world context is connected to an aspect of adolescents' lives, although it may not be age-appropriate. 	2

Open-ended	Relevant and engaging	Challenging and provocative	Significant	Level
The question:	The question:	The question:	The question:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is not content-specific is "open" such as "how", "why" is designed so that students can explore a variety of possibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assumes a degree of prior knowledge and experience "hooks" student interest in an age-appropriate manner is phrased in student-friendly language provides ways for students to be actively involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> seeks to extend prior knowledge and understandings provides for varied ways in which students can increase their understandings and competencies could contain an unfamiliar big idea which requires "unpacking". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is student centred encourages students to consider the unit's big idea and to reflect on it in the context of their adolescent world. 	3

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is the process of determining for each student a level of achievement in the assessment criteria. Teachers will bring together information they have on student learning to build a picture of where each student sits on the level of achievement scales.

Teachers are not confined to using just one assessment task in each MYP unit of work—they should use data taken from a range of assessments.

Culminating task

Teachers are required to develop a culminating assessment task for each MYP unit. A culminating task will provide students with further opportunities to demonstrate their learning in an authentic real-life situation.

Often a culminating task will allow students an opportunity to respond to the MYP unit question. However, it is critically important that teachers consider how students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the significant concept or big idea at some point during the MYP unit of work, if not during the culminating task.

Teachers must think as assessors, asking themselves the following questions.

- "What will constitute acceptable evidence of understanding?"
- "How will students show what they have understood about the significant concept or big idea?"

Descriptor	Level
<p>The culminating task is content-based and does not provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept, skills and subject-specific knowledge.</p>	0
<p>The culminating task provides students with limited opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the significant concept/big idea; the emphasis is on demonstrating developed skills and knowledge. The task requires students to use a limited range of approaches to learning skills and subject knowledge that have few connections with the objectives that frame the unit. Students are directed to communicate their learning in one way.</p>	1
<p>The culminating task allows students to demonstrate their understanding of the significant concept/big idea, although it may seem prescriptive and restrict student options. The task requires students to use skills, some of which may be represented in the objectives framed by the unit, and selected subject-specific knowledge. There is some choice in the way that students communicate their learning, although these may not align with the objectives.</p>	2
<p>The culminating task is open-ended and designed for students to demonstrate their understanding of the significant concept/big idea. The task allows students to use their developed approaches to learning skills that are aligned with the MYP objectives identified in stage 2 of the planner, and their specific-subject knowledge. The task provides multiple ways for students to communicate their learning and aligns with the MYP objectives that frame the unit.</p>	3