

Assessment outline

First assessment 2015

The assessment model in theory of knowledge (TOK) has two components, both of which should be completed within the 100 hours designated for the course.

Both the essay and the presentation are assessed using global impression marking. The essay contributes **67%** of the final mark and the presentation contributes **33%** of the final mark.

Assessment component	Marks available
<p>Part 1 Essay on a prescribed title</p> <p>One essay on a title chosen from a list of six titles prescribed by the IB for each examination session. The prescribed titles will be issued on the OCC in the September prior to submission for May session schools, and in the March prior to submission for November session schools.</p> <p>The maximum length for the essay is 1,600 words.</p> <p>All essays are externally assessed by the IB.</p>	10 marks
<p>Part 2 The presentation</p> <p>One presentation to the class by an individual or a group (a maximum of three persons in a group). Approximately 10 minutes per student is allowed for the presentation.</p> <p>One written presentation planning document (TK/PPD) for each student.</p> <p>The teacher must use the assessment descriptors published in this guide to arrive at a mark for the presentation based on the student's presentation plan (on the TK/PPD) and his/her observation of the presentation itself. The teacher must record his/her observations of the presentation on the TK/PPD. A sample of TK/PPDs is selected and moderated by the IB.</p>	10 marks

Assessment details

Nature of assessment tasks

The two assessment tasks, the essay and the presentation, both have at their centre reflection on knowledge questions, but this reflection is demonstrated differently in each. The emphasis in the TOK presentation is on demonstrating an understanding of knowledge at work in the world, and is in a sense an extensive TOK reflection on a single example (the real-life situation). It is thus distinguished from the TOK essay, where students are required to show their TOK thinking skills in the discussion of a prescribed title that may be primarily conceptual in nature.

Real-life examples play an important role in the essay by illustrating the main ideas or taking forward the argument. Real-life examples should come from the student's academic experience or from life beyond the classroom, as hypothetical examples are usually unconvincing. Anecdotal examples may be relevant but cannot on their own support the analysis in an essay. Neither the essay nor the presentation is primarily a research exercise, although some factual information may need to be included. If so, its reliability needs to be established through proper checks and referencing.

Part 1: Essay on a prescribed title

General instructions

Each student must submit for external assessment an essay on any **one** of the **six** titles prescribed by the IB for each examination session.

The titles ask generic questions about knowledge and are cross-disciplinary in nature. They may be answered with reference to any part or parts of the TOK course, to specific disciplines, or with reference to opinions gained about knowledge both inside and outside the classroom.

The titles are not meant to be treated only in the abstract, or on the basis of external authorities. In all cases, essays should express the conclusions reached by students through a sustained consideration of knowledge questions. **Claims and counterclaims should be formulated and main ideas should be illustrated with varied and effective examples that show the approach consciously taken by the student.** Essays should demonstrate the student's ability to link knowledge questions to AOKs and WOKs.

The chosen title must be used exactly as given; it must not be altered in any way. Students who modify the titles are likely to receive lower scores, since **the knowledge questions that are explored in the essay must be connected to the titles** in their prescribed formulation.

- If the title has been modified but it is still clear which prescribed title for the current session it refers to, the essay will be marked against that prescribed title. Any lack of relevance in the student's response to the prescribed title arising from this modification will be reflected in the score awarded.
- If it is clear that the title bears no literal resemblance to any title for the current session, the essay will be awarded a score of zero, in accordance with the TOK essay assessment instrument.

The essay must be written in standard 12 font and double spaced.

The role of the teacher

In relation to the student's essay on a prescribed title, the teacher has three principal responsibilities:

- to encourage and support the student in the writing of the essay
- to provide the student with advice on and guidance about the skills needed
- to ensure that the essay is the student's own work.

These responsibilities should be met through the following interactions.

1. The student should **discuss the prescribed titles** with the teacher, although the final choice remains with the student who should be encouraged wherever possible to develop his or her own ideas.
2. After choosing the title and unpacking/developing ideas in relation to it, the student may present his or her work (an **exploration**) to the teacher in some written form. For example, this might resemble a set of notes and ideas, with tentative connections drawn between them, spread over a large piece of paper. Discussion with the teacher should subsequently allow the student to create a **plan** in which the structure of the essay can be laid out by paragraph.
3. After this, **the student is permitted (and should be encouraged) to present to the teacher one full draft of the essay.** The teacher is permitted to provide written comments of a global nature, but is not permitted to mark or edit this draft.
4. While the student may seek further advice, for instance, on the appropriateness of a particular example, or on the degree of clarity if writing in a second or third language, **no further written advice** on drafts is permitted. It is the student's responsibility to correct mistakes and make improvements.

The procedure for uploading the TOK essay can be found in the *Handbook of procedures for the Diploma Programme*.

Academic honesty

Authenticity

Teachers must ensure to the best of their ability that essays are the student's own work. In cases where there is concern, the authenticity of the essay can be checked through a discussion with the student and scrutiny of one or more of the following before uploading:

- the student's initial exploration of the title
- the full draft of the essay
- the student's references and/or bibliography for the essay, where appropriate
- the style of the writing, which may reveal obvious discrepancies
- a report from an online plagiarism detection service.

Acknowledgments and references

Students are expected to acknowledge fully and in detail the work, thoughts or ideas of another person if incorporated in work submitted for assessment, and to ensure that their own work is never given to another student, either in the form of hard copy or by electronic means, knowing that it might be submitted for assessment as the work of that other student.

The IB does not prescribe which style(s) of referencing or in-text citation should be used by students; this is left to the discretion of appropriate faculty/staff in the school. Regardless of the reference style adopted by the school for a given subject, it is expected that the minimum information given includes name of author(s), date of publication, title of source, and page numbers as applicable.

Students are expected to use a standard style and use it consistently so that credit is given to all sources used, including sources that have been paraphrased or summarized. When writing text a student must clearly distinguish between their words and those of others by the use of quotation marks (or other method such as indentation) followed by an appropriate reference that denotes an entry in the bibliography or works cited. The title “bibliography” or “works cited” depends on the referencing style that has been chosen.

If an electronic source is cited, the date of access must be indicated.

Students are not expected to show faultless expertise in referencing, but are expected to demonstrate that all sources have been acknowledged. Students must be advised that visual material, text, graphs, images and/or data published in print or in electronic sources that is not their own must also be attributed to the source. Again, an appropriate style of referencing/citation must be used.

Factual claims that may be considered common knowledge (for example, “animals are not capable of performing photosynthesis”) do not need to be referenced. However, it should be noted that what one person thinks of as common knowledge within a particular culture, may be unfamiliar to someone else, for example, an examiner in a different part of the world. This would relate particularly to examples given from popular culture. If in doubt, give an authoritative source for the claim.

Classroom handouts, if they are the original work of a teacher, must be cited in the same way as a book. If their contents have been taken from a separate source, that source should be cited.

Bibliography or works cited

The TOK essay is not primarily a research paper but it is expected that specific sources will be used and these must be acknowledged in a bibliography or works cited list.

The bibliography or works cited should include only those works (such as books, journals, magazines and online sources) used by the student. There needs to be a clear connection between the works listed and where they are used in the text. A list of books at the end of the essay is not useful unless reference has been made to all of them within the essay.

As appropriate, the bibliography or works cited list should specify:

- author(s), title, date and place of publication
- the name of the publisher or URL (http://...)
- the date when the web page was accessed, adhering to one standard method of listing sources.

Failure to comply with this requirement will be viewed as plagiarism and will, therefore, be treated as a case of academic misconduct.

Essay length

The maximum length of the essay is 1,600 words. Extended notes, extensive footnotes or appendices are not appropriate to a TOK essay and may not be read.

The word count includes:

- the main part of the essay
- any quotations.

The word count does not include:

- any acknowledgments
- the references (whether given in footnotes, endnotes or in-text)
- any maps, charts, diagrams, annotated illustrations or tables
- the bibliography.

Essays that exceed the word limit will be penalized in the following ways:

- examiners are instructed to stop reading after 1,600 words and to base their assessment on just the first 1,600 words.
- a 1 mark penalty will be applied to the essay.

Students are required to indicate the number of words when the essay is uploaded during the submission process.

Assessment instruments

Using global impression marking

The method of assessing the essay on a prescribed title and the presentation in TOK judges each piece of work in relation to written descriptions of performance and not in relation to the work of other students.

The assessment of both tasks is envisaged as a process of holistic or global judgment rather than an analytical process of totalling the assessment of separate criteria. Although in the essay the assessment is presented as two aspects, they are integrated into five described levels of performance, allowing for variation in student performance across different parts of the overall assessment. Because of the requirement for a reasonable mark range along which to differentiate student performance, each markband level descriptor corresponds to a range of two different marks.

Assessment judgments should in the first instance be made with reference to the level descriptors for **typical characteristics**. The **possible characteristics** underneath are intended as starting prompts for discussion and development of a shared vocabulary among examiners, moderators, teachers and students as to how work at each level might be described.

The possible characteristics corresponding to a level of performance should not be thought of as a checklist of attributes; they are intended to function only as tentative descriptions, some of which may seem appropriate to apply to work at that level.

The achievement level descriptors concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels (zero is the lowest level of achievement) failure to achieve is included in the description.

These level descriptors are designed to be used as a whole, and operate at a global level. It is to be understood that:

- the described levels are not a checklist or necessary minimum
- the different levels of performance are not discrete, and differences of degree are involved
- different levels suggest typical performance, and there are always exceptions requiring individual or case by case judgments
- the performance of students can be uneven across different aspects, but it is the overall impression that is most important.

Examiners and moderators will use the levels of performance as the terms on which they make a judgment that draws on their knowledge of what students at this level can do with tasks of this kind. How examiners and moderators will make a judgement about the level of performance attained in a particular student response will vary.

Essay examiners may make a decision in the course of reading the piece, and then review it and make a final judgment after completing a reading. Or they may register the comments and arguments of a student, read the essay as a whole and make a decision in retrospect. **In either case the described levels are to be seen as global and holistic rather than a checklist of necessary characteristics.** Examiners will make judgments about individual pieces of work by taking into account and evaluating the distinctive characteristics of a particular script.

Presentation moderators will similarly endeavour to reach a holistic judgment based on the responses of the student(s) and teacher on the TK/PPD form.

The markbands for each assessment task in effect represent a single holistic criterion applied to the piece of work, which is judged as a whole. The highest descriptor levels do not imply faultless performance and examiners and teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.

Part 1: Essay on a prescribed title

The following diagram shows the question underpinning a global impression judgment of the TOK essay. This question is to shape the reading and assessing of TOK essays.

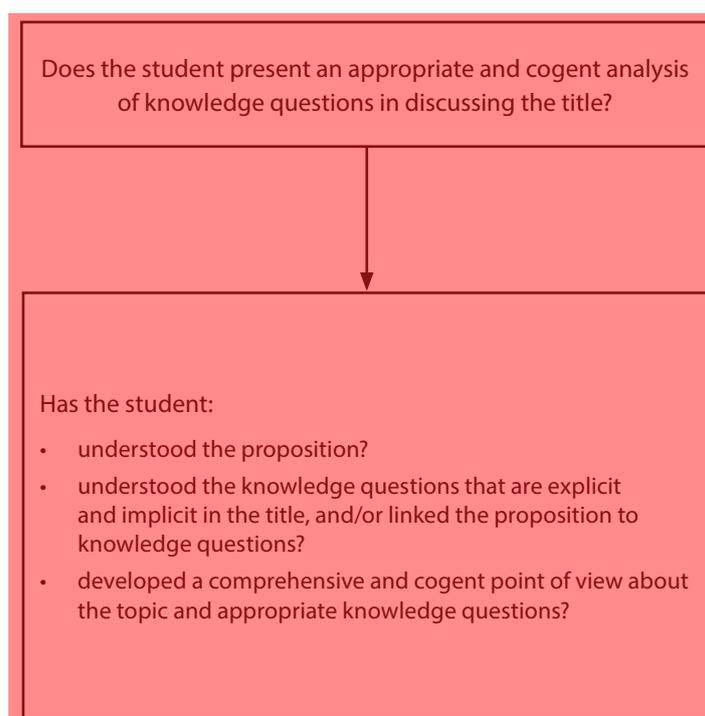


Figure 20

The judgment about the TOK essay is to be made on the basis of the following two aspects:

1. Understanding knowledge questions

This aspect is concerned with the extent to which the essay focuses on knowledge questions relevant to the prescribed title, and with the depth and breadth of the understanding demonstrated in the essay.

Knowledge questions addressed in the essay should be shown to have a direct connection to the chosen prescribed title, or to be important in relation to it.

Depth of understanding is often indicated by drawing distinctions within WOKs and AOKs, or by connecting several facets of knowledge questions to these.

Breadth of understanding is often indicated by making comparisons between WOKs and AOKs. Since not all prescribed titles lend themselves to an extensive treatment of an equal range of AOKs or WOKs, this element in the descriptors should be applied with concern for the particularity of the title.

Relevant questions to be considered include the following.

- Does the essay demonstrate understanding of knowledge questions that are relevant to the prescribed title?
- Does the essay demonstrate an awareness of the connections between knowledge questions, AOKs and WOKs?
- Does the student show an awareness of his or her own perspective as a knower in relation to other perspectives, such as those that may arise, for example, from academic and philosophical traditions, culture or position in society (gender, age, and so on)?

2. Quality of analysis of knowledge questions

This aspect is concerned only with knowledge questions that are relevant to the prescribed title.

Relevant questions to be considered include the following.

- What is the quality of the inquiry into knowledge questions?
- Are the main points in the essay justified?
- Are the arguments coherent and compelling?
- Have counterclaims been considered?
- Are the implications and underlying assumptions of the essay's argument identified?
- Are the arguments effectively evaluated?

Analysis of a knowledge question that is not relevant to the prescribed title will not be assessed.

Note: The TOK essay is not an assessment of first or second language literacy. Students should have properly edited their work, but whether they have done so is not in itself a matter for assessment. While the two are usually highly correlated, assessors will be wary of taking linguistic fluency for substantive understanding and analysis of knowledge questions. A fluent and stylish rendition of different knowledge questions does not in itself amount to analysis or argument. Discussion of knowledge questions must be clearly related and appropriately linked to a set title. Equally, an essay written with minor mechanical and grammatical errors can still be an excellent essay and examiners will not take these errors into consideration when marking the essay. It is only when these errors become major and impede the comprehension of the essay that they will be taken into account.

TOK essay assessment instrument

Does the student present an appropriate and cogent analysis of knowledge questions in discussing the title?						
Aspect	Level 5 Excellent 9–10	Level 4 Very good 7–8	Level 3 Satisfactory 5–6	Level 2 Basic 3–4	Level 1 Elementary 1–2	Irrelevant 0
Understanding knowledge questions	There is a <i>sustained focus</i> on knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title and are well chosen— developed with <i>investigation</i> of different perspectives and linked effectively to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	There is a <i>focus</i> on knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title— developed with <i>acknowledgment</i> of different perspectives and linked to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	There is a <i>focus</i> on some knowledge questions connected to the prescribed title—with <i>some development</i> and linking to areas of knowledge and/or ways of knowing .	<i>Some knowledge questions</i> that are connected to the prescribed title are considered, but the essay is largely <i>descriptive</i> , with <i>superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge</i> and/or ways of knowing .	The essay has only very limited relevance to the prescribed title—relevant points are <i>descriptive</i> .	The essay does not reach a standard described by levels 1–5 or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles on the list for the current session.
Quality of analysis of knowledge questions	Arguments are <i>clear</i> , supported by real-life examples and are <i>effectively evaluated</i> ; counterclaims are extensively <i>explored</i> ; implications are <i>drawn</i> .	Arguments are <i>clear</i> , supported by real-life examples and are <i>evaluated</i> ; some counterclaims are identified and <i>explored</i> .	<i>Some arguments</i> are <i>clear</i> and supported by examples ; some counterclaims are <i>identified</i> .	Arguments are offered but are <i>unclear</i> and/or <i>not supported</i> by effective examples .	Assertions are offered but are <i>not supported</i> .	
Some possible characteristics						
	Cogent Accomplished Discerning Individual Lucid Insightful Compelling	Pertinent Relevant Thoughtful Analytical Organized Credible Coherent	Typical Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent	Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Derivative Rudimentary Limited	Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless	