



SCHOOL OF THE NATIONS
聯合國學校

TOK ESSAY

Student's Guide

(some of the texts in the content of this guide are taken or adapted from the IB TOK Guide)

Introduction

According to the IB, the TOK essay “engages students in a formal, sustained piece of writing in response to one of the six titles that are prescribed by the IB for each examination session. These titles take the form of knowledge questions that are focused on the areas of knowledge.”

Areas of Knowledge: History
The Arts
Mathematics
Human Sciences
Natural Sciences

The TOK Essay is to be completed during the early part of the second year of the Diploma Program. Therefore, you will complete this task in the second year of the program which is Form 6 in context of the school. It is important to follow strictly the school's overall schedule of internal deadlines for the completion of the TOK Essay. You will be guided in this process. You will have the opportunity to do practices for the TOK Essay and understand how it will be graded. This is an external assessment. Therefore, it is marked by IB examiners. It contributes to 2/3 of your TOK grade. Each student must write the essay individually.

The Prescribed Titles

The IB releases a set of six prescribed titles for each examination session. These titles are published six months before the submission deadline. Your teachers are advised to spend 10 hours of teaching on the TOK Essay.

The chosen title must be used exactly as given; it must not be altered in any way.

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 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.

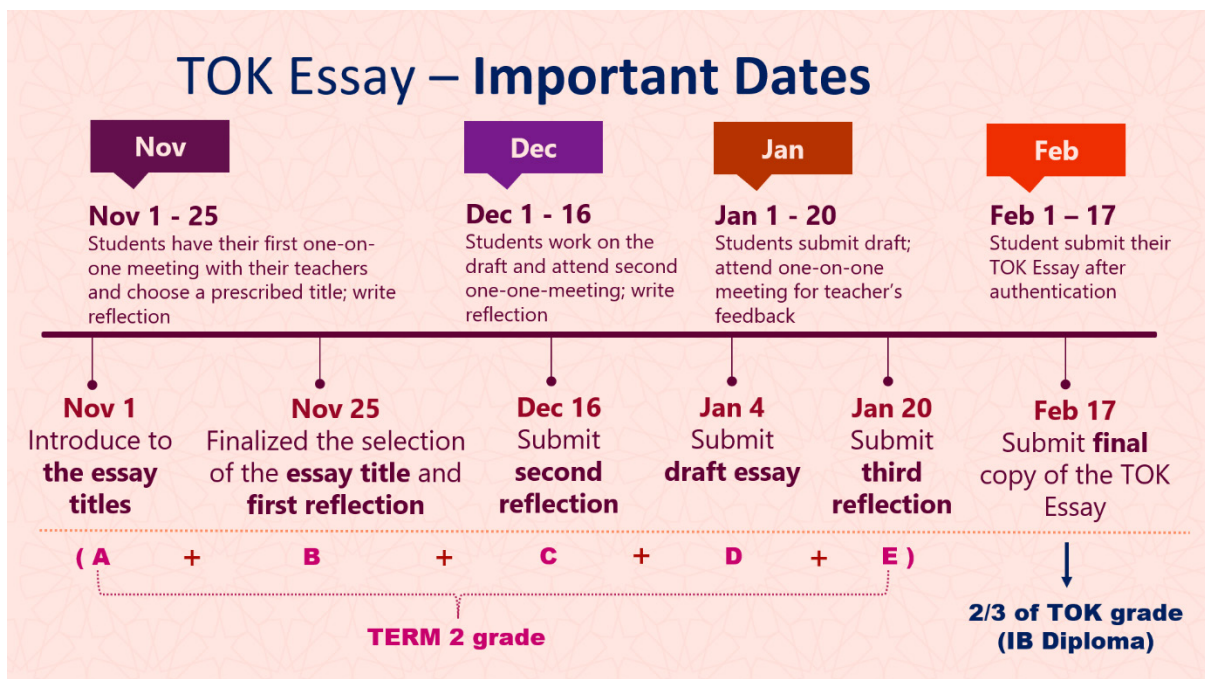
The prescribed titles for May 2023 sessions are:

1. Is replicability necessary in the production of knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
2. For artists and natural scientists, which is more important: what can be explained or what cannot be explained? Discuss with reference to the arts and the natural sciences.
3. Does it matter if our acquisition of knowledge happens in “bubbles” where some information and voices are excluded? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
4. Do you agree that it is “astonishing that so little knowledge can give us so much power” (Bertrand Russell)? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.
5. Are visual representations always helpful in the communication of knowledge? Discuss with reference to the human sciences and mathematics.
6. To what extent is the knowledge we produce determined by the methodologies we use? Discuss with reference to history and one other area of knowledge.

The Schedule and internal deadlines

TOK lessons on the TOK Essay and its requirement will take place in the mid of Term 1 after you have completed your review of the *Areas of Knowledge*, the *TOK Concepts*, and the *Knowledge Framework* (completed in the beginning of Term 1) and the *Essay Practice*. You will be guided in unpacking the prescribed title of your choice.

The diagram below shows some of the internal deadlines that you have to be aware of.



Do note that certain work during this process will contribute to the Term 2 grade that will be reflected in your school report card. The final essay is meant for the IB DP external assessment and will not be used for any school related grading or reporting. These are strictly for the TOK grade for your IB Diploma Program only.

Three required teacher–student interactions for the TOK essay

During the first interaction (interview), you should discuss the prescribed titles with the teacher. While the teacher may provide advice and suggestions, the final choice of title remains with the student, who should develop their own thinking and ideas. It is expected that you will write a reflection on this meeting after the session and post it on ManageBac. This is the platform where you will keep evidences of the essay writing process.

You will then discuss your initial exploration of your selected title and present to your teacher your essay plan/proposal during your second interaction. It your responsibility to develop ideas in relation to your selected titles and the areas of knowledge that you will be using for making comparison or discussion. It is expected that you discuss your initial work/explorations with the teacher by sharing them in written form. Without a written set of notes, it is extremely difficult for you to later turn them into a more formal essay plan.

Finally, in your third and final interaction with the teacher, you will get a formal feedback on the draft of your essay. Remember, you are permitted to present **ONE FULL DRAFT** of the essay to the teacher. The teacher will provide oral or written advice on how the work could be improved. This advice may take the form of written comments of a global nature, but teachers are not permitted to mark or edit this draft. While the student may seek further advice from the teacher, for example, on the appropriateness of a particular example or on the clarity of a section of writing, no further written advice on drafts is permitted. The next version handed to the teacher must be the final version for submission.

Guidance and authenticity

While the teacher has the responsibility to assist you in understanding the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic honesty (especially authenticity and intellectual property), you share in this responsibility by making sure you are familiar with the assessment instrument, ask clarification questions, seek assistance during all stages of the essay writing process and pay attention to cite external sources you referred to carefully.

The TOK essay must be your own work. You must confirm that the work is your authentic work and constitutes the final version of that work. Once you have officially submitted the final version of the work it cannot be retracted.

All work submitted to the IB for moderation or assessment must be authenticated by a teacher. It is typically done through scrutiny of the style of writing compared with work known to be that of the student, or the analysis of the work by a web-based plagiarism detection service. Your work will not be submitted if it includes any known instances of suspected or confirmed misconduct.

Global Impression Marking

The TOK Essay is marked using a global impression marking approach. This means that the assessment this task is envisaged as a process of holistic or global judgment rather than an analytical process of totaling the assessment of separate criteria. The assessment instruments present five described levels of performance. These levels are to be seen as global and holistic descriptors rather than as a checklist of necessary characteristics. When marking, the aim is to find the descriptor that conveys most accurately the level attained by the student. It is not necessary for every single aspect of a level descriptor to be met for a mark in that level to be awarded. Your teacher will explain more in class. Do make sure you pay extra attention during the session so that you know how your work will be graded.

TOK Essay assessment instrument

The TOK essay is an opportunity for students to engage in a formal, sustained piece of writing in response to a prescribed title focused on the areas of knowledge. The assessment of this task is underpinned by the following single driving question

“DOES THE STUDENT PROVIDE A CLEAR, COHERENT AND CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF THE ESSAY TITLE?”

The assessment instrument provided describes five levels of performance in response to this driving question. These levels are to be seen as holistic descriptors rather than as a checklist of characteristics.

Does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title?					
Excellent 9-10	Good 7-8	Satisfactory 5-6	Basic 3-4	Rudimentary 1-2	0
The discussion has a sustained focus on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge. Arguments are clear, coherent and effectively supported by specific examples. The implications of arguments are considered. There is clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view.	The discussion is focused on the title and is linked effectively to areas of knowledge. Arguments are clear, coherent and supported by examples. There is awareness and some evaluation of different points of view.	The discussion is focused on the title and is developed with some links to areas of knowledge. Arguments are offered and are supported by examples. There is some awareness of different points of view.	The discussion is connected to the title and makes superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge. The discussion is largely descriptive. Limited arguments are offered but they are unclear and are not supported by effective examples.	The discussion is weakly connected to the title. While there may be links to the areas of knowledge, any relevant points are descriptive or consist only of unsupported assertions.	The discussion does not reach the standard described by the other levels or is not a response to one of the prescribed titles for the correct examination session.
Possible characteristics					
Insightful Convincing Lucid Precise	Pertinent Relevant Analytical Organized	Acceptable Mainstream Adequate Competent	Underdeveloped Basic Superficial Limited	Ineffective Descriptive Incoherent Formless	

Step 1: Initial exploration

Here are a few things that you can expect during the initial exploration of the essay:

- Brainstorm ideas for all six prescribed titles as a class.
- Select 3 out of 6 prescribed titles that you are interested in and unpack them further individually. Seek advice from your teachers.
- After given your initial selection enough time, decide on 1 out of the 3 prescribed titles shortlisted in previous session.
- Write an initial description of your approach and understanding of the selected prescribed title.
- Submit it to the teacher and print a copy to your first teacher-student interaction (interview). Remember, your ideas have to be in written form.
- Write your first reflection on ManageBac.

Refer to the template provided.

Step 2: Making a proposal for your TOK Essay

Complete the TOK Essay plan on your selected title.

Refer to the proposal template attached.

Step 3: Writing your first draft

Since your teachers can only give feedback on ONE draft only, do make sure your first draft is of good quality with substantial content. The TOK Essay must be written in standard 12 type size and be double spaced. It is not primarily a research paper, but it is expected that specific sources will be used, and these must be acknowledged.

- a title page with the prescribed title and word count
- a 1,600-word essay
- appropriate citations and references – choose either APA or MLA

Consult the study and reference materials provided by your teachers.

Make sure your file follows the format attached.

Word count

The maximum length of the essay is 1,600 words. **DO NOT** use footnotes or appendices.

The word count includes:

- the main part of the essay
- any quotations.

The word count does not include:

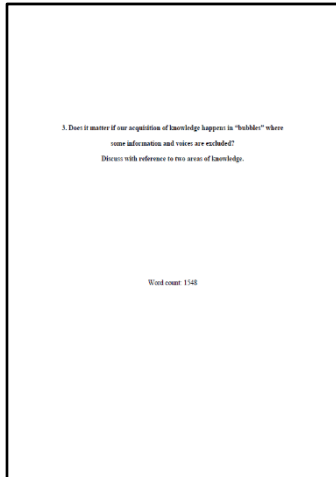
- any acknowledgments
- the references (in-text) and bibliography
- any maps, charts, diagrams, annotated illustrations or tables.

If an essay exceeds the word limit, then examiners are instructed to stop reading after 1,600 words and to base their assessment on just the first 1,600 words. Students are required to indicate the number of words when the essay is uploaded during the submission process.

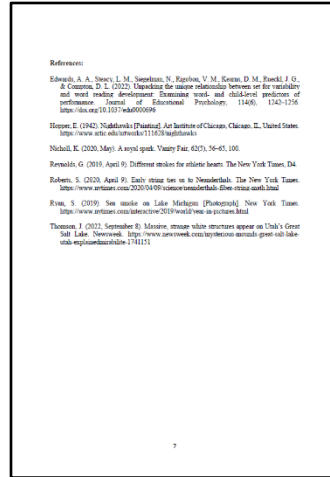
Step 4: Finalize your TOK Essay and submit it

After receiving the official feedback from your teacher, you will have about 2 weeks to finalize your essay. It is for this reason that your draft must be of a good quality and substantial since it is quite impossible to for you find time to repeat the process all over again.

The final product should follow the same format as the draft.



sample cover page



sample reference page

Step 5: Reflection

Make sure all reflections for the teacher-student interactions (interviews) are accounted for. These reflections have to be entered and saved on ManageBac.

Example:

The screenshot displays the ManageBac interface for a student's reflections. At the top, there are navigation tabs for "Workspace", "Journal", and "Planning and Progress Form". Below these, the "Student" profile is visible. The main content area is titled "First Interaction" and contains a text box with the following reflection: "After the meeting with the teacher, I recognized the blind spot in my exploration of the prescribed title. I have been focusing too much on evaluating the effect of recency without directly answering the prompt, which is suspected of being off-topic. To address this issue, I should shift the focus from 'The recent evidence is inevitably the strongest' to 'Is it too quick to assume'. In addition, it also inspires me to broaden the". Below the text box, it indicates "The recommended length of this response is 100 words. 5 available." and shows the date "November 1, 2022" with a calendar icon and a "Lock" checkbox. The "Second Interaction" section follows, with a text box containing: "The second meeting with my teacher encouraged me to examine the validity of my examples. Merely taking the 'good' pieces of evidence into account and then comparing the strength of two pieces of valid evidence can better support and permit my statement to be more defensible. On top of that, they should be specific and detailed. This can be challenging as not only information about how the recency of shreds of". It also shows "The recommended length of this response is 100 words. 6 available.", the date "December 16, 2022", and a checked "Lock" checkbox. The "Third Interaction" section is partially visible at the bottom.

TOK Essay

Initial Exploration

Name of student: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

INDIVIDUAL PLANNING SPACE

A. Select Prescribed Title

- 1. Is replicability necessary in the production of knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
- 2. For artists and natural scientists, which is more important: what can be explained or what cannot be explained? Discuss with reference to the arts and the natural sciences.
- 3. Does it matter if our acquisition of knowledge happens in “bubbles” where some information and voices are excluded? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
- 4. Do you agree that it is “astonishing that so little knowledge can give us so much power” (Bertrand Russell)? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.
- 5. Are visual representations always helpful in the communication of knowledge? Discuss with reference to the human sciences and mathematics.
- 6. To what extent is the knowledge we produce determined by the methodologies we use? Discuss with reference to history and one other area of knowledge.

B. Explain briefly how you would unpack your selected essay title.

TOK Essay

Student Proposal

Name of student: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

A. Select Prescribed Title

- 1. Is replicability necessary in the production of knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
- 2. For artists and natural scientists, which is more important: what can be explained or what cannot be explained? Discuss with reference to the arts and the natural sciences.
- 3. Does it matter if our acquisition of knowledge happens in “bubbles” where some information and voices are excluded? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
- 4. Do you agree that it is “astonishing that so little knowledge can give us so much power” (Bertrand Russell)? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.
- 5. Are visual representations always helpful in the communication of knowledge? Discuss with reference to the human sciences and mathematics.
- 6. To what extent is the knowledge we produce determined by the methodologies we use? Discuss with reference to history and one other area of knowledge.

B. The Areas of Knowledge that you will explore

- HISTORY
- THE ARTS
- MATHEMATICS
- HUMAN SCIENCES
- NATURAL SCIENCES

C. The 4 to 5 points you plan to make.

#1 _____

#2 _____

#3 _____

#4 _____

#5 _____

D. Two examples from your first AOK

#1 _____

#2 _____

E. Two examples from your second AOK

#1 _____

#2 _____

