Assessment details

Nature of the tasks

The two assessment tasks, the essay and the presentation, are seen as complementary opportunities for students to show the extent to which they have achieved the TOK course objectives.

Both assessment tasks have at their centre reflection on knowledge issues 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. 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. Concrete examples play an important role in the essay in illustrating the main ideas or taking forward the argument but the presentation is in a sense an extensive TOK reflection on a single example, albeit one that is necessarily of a particular kind.

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.

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Part 2 The presentation

General

Students must make one or more individual and/or small group presentations to the class during the course. The maximum group size is **five**. If a student makes more than one presentation, the teacher should choose the best one (or the best group presentation in which the student participated) for the purposes of assessment.

The TOK presentation requires students to identify and explore the knowledge issues raised by a substantive real-life situation that is of interest to them. Aided by their teachers (see below), students can select the situation they will tackle from a more limited domain of personal, school, or community relevance, or from a wider one of national, international or global scope.

It is important that the situation that is selected is sufficiently circumscribed, so as to allow an effective treatment of knowledge issues. For this reason, it is wise to avoid topics so unfamiliar to the class that a great deal of explanation is needed before the underlying knowledge issues can be appreciated and explored.

Presentations may take many forms, such as lectures, skits, simulations, games, dramatized readings, interviews or debates. Students may use supporting material such as videos, MS PowerPoint presentations, overhead projections, posters, questionnaires, recordings of songs or interviews, costumes, or props. Under no circumstances, however, should the presentation be simply an essay read aloud to the class.

Each presentation will have two stages:

- an introduction, briefly describing the real-life situation and linking it to one or more relevant knowledge issue
- a treatment of the knowledge issue(s) that explores their nature and responses to them, and shows how these relate to the chosen situation.

A good presentation will demonstrate the presenter's personal involvement in the topic and show both why the topic is important and how it relates to other areas (see assessment criteria for more details).

Approximately 10 minutes per presenter should be allowed, up to a maximum in most cases of 30 minutes per group. Presentations should be scheduled to allow time for class discussion afterwards.

Interaction and audience participation are allowed during the presentation, not just in follow-up discussion, but there must be an identifiable substantial input from the presenter(s) that is assessable.

Before the presentation, the individual or group must give the teacher a copy of the presentation planning document (see below). The document is not to be handed out to the audience.

The role of the teacher

The presentation should be a positive TOK learning experience for the audience. With this goal in mind, teachers may assist students in the choice of topic (situation) for the presentation (or even supply it), and in a general way support their thinking about relevant knowledge claims, means of justification, the issue(s) to be posed, the perspectives to be addressed, and the connections that can be made. Often a variety of appropriate knowledge issues can be identified in the kind of real-life situations/contemporary problems most students will want to present. Teachers should help them concentrate their efforts on a clearly formulated one.

Each topic should be treated only once in a particular teaching group.

In summary, the teacher should give the presenter(s) every opportunity to construct a presentation that will advance the aims of the TOK course for the class as a whole. The teacher may support students by guiding them towards suitable approaches but should not do their work for them.

The date when each presentation is to take place should be given to students well in advance, to allow sufficient time for topics to be chosen and for material to be prepared.

Internal assessment documentation

Presentation planning document

Each student must complete and submit a presentation planning document. In a group presentation these may, but need not, be compiled individually. This document will summarize the thinking behind the topic, state the specific knowledge issues to be addressed, and present an outline of the intended treatment of them, in a maximum of one typed A4 page or equivalent. It should provide clear evidence of an inquiry in keeping with the aims and objectives of TOK, and meeting the requirements of the assessment criteria for the presentation. It must not be an essay, but should be in skeleton or bullet point form.

Content of presentation planning document

Please describe your planning for the presentation, either in the space below, or on an attached A4 word-processed page.

Your description must include:

- the knowledge issue that will be the focus of your presentation
- a summary in note form (for example, a bulleted list) of the way you plan to deal with knowledge issues during your presentation.

Presentation marking form

Both students and teachers must fill in the presentation marking form (the reverse side of the presentation planning document). Student presenters award themselves an achievement level for each of the four assessment criteria and briefly justify the level they have given. If the teacher considers the student mark accurate, they may simply reproduce it. Both students and teachers are required to certify the authenticity of the presentation work.

Participants in a group presentation should be marked individually, although all may be given the same marks if they have contributed equally. In a group presentation, not every student need speak for the same amount of time, but all students are expected to make a contribution and to participate actively.

Content of presentation marking form

Presenter's assessment

Each presenter should give themselves an achievement level for each of the four assessment criteria. Presenters should briefly justify the level they have given, in the "Comments/evidence" space provided.

Teacher's assessment

In the "Comments/evidence" box, please indicate briefly why you have given each level.

Both students and teachers are required to certify the authenticity of the presentation work.

The marks that will be used towards the final grade will be those entered in the teacher section of the form and transmitted via IBIS.

Verification of internal assessment

All schools must retain both the presentation planning document and the presentation marking form for each student until the close of session (15 September [15 March] for May [November] session schools).

In addition, some schools in each session will be required to record some or all of their presentations. These schools may be randomly chosen, or may be ones where a possible problem has been identified, for example, by analysis of the marks awarded in previous sessions. It is not necessary for schools to record presentations unless they are asked to do so, although it can be a useful exercise in order to standardize internal marking, where more than one teacher is involved.

Any adjustment (moderation) of the schools' internal assessment marks will take place on the basis of the evidence provided.

Examples of presentation topics

It should be noted that these are merely examples, meant only to illustrate the kinds of topics appropriate for TOK presentations. In particular, they are included to provide a concrete sense of what is meant by "real-life situation/contemporary problem" and to show how a knowledge issue can be identified in it and then treated from different perspectives. As well as guiding the selection of appropriate topics, the examples also illustrate ways that topics may be treated in the presentation, in accordance with the assessment criteria.

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: Global warming

- Knowledge issues: "Can we be certain that global warming is taking place?" or, "Does language (or the use of statistics, graphs, photographs) affect our view of whether or not the planet is undergoing global warming?"
- Format: Students analyse and critically evaluate video and newspaper clips involving the views of experts, politicians and activists who defend or dispute the notion that the planet is suffering from global warming. Each member of the group draws attention to different aspects of the evidence—the nature of the words used, statistics and graphs, photographs.
- Knower's (student's) point of view: As a group, students suggest that the evidence in favour of global warming seems compelling, but underline that in some cases it is difficult to separate some protagonists' positions and how they are formulated from the interest groups they represent.

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: Intensive agriculture

- Knowledge issue: "How can we know whether intensive farming methods are always harmful?"
- Format: Inputs by students representing the views of farmers in different circumstances from different parts of the world, cross-examined by a presenter and members of the audience.
- Knower's (student's) point of view: It may be easy to take a view on (to think we know) what is right in our own situation. Looked at globally the question is much more complicated.

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: Reliability of media reporting of science

- Knowledge issues: "What constitutes responsible journalism? How can we know whether scientific conclusions are justified?"
- Format: Summary and analysis of a newspaper article reporting on a new scientific study showing that a diet that contains no fat can lead to more weight gain than a similar diet that contains some fat (the original stimulus). Discussion of the quality of the newspaper article (what information ought it to contain, so that we can make a good judgment about the reliability of the claims made?) and of the scientific study it describes (how can we tell whether the evidence cited in the scientific study justifies its conclusions?).
- Knower's (student's) point of view: It is easy to tell that some newspapers are more concerned with entertainment than with truth. How easy is it to tell how much credibility to give to more serious stories?

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: What makes a work of art?

- Knowledge issues: "What is it that distinguishes an ordinary bag of rubbish from a major work of art that just looks like a bag of rubbish? Can anything be art—and, if so, what makes it into art?"
- Format: Skit of a TV talk show discussion about an incident when an artwork in an exhibition, consisting of a plastic bag full of rubbish, was mistakenly thrown out by a cleaner. Students role-play the host of the show, the artist of the work in question, a visual arts critic and a gallery owner, all of whom offer other examples of contentious contemporary art and their ideas about what distinguishes these artworks from non-art.
- Knower's (student's) point of view: Why are people prepared to dismiss contemporary art without understanding much about it, while often blindly believing scientific claims, however outlandish and improbable?

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: Demonstrations in China against the issue of a new history textbook in Japan

- Knowledge issues: Who should decide, and on what grounds, what history should be taught in schools? What part does the notion of historical truth play here?
- Format: Arguments for and against the Chinese attempt to tell the Japanese what they should teach about the actions of the Japanese army in China during the second world war. Should other countries be able to have a say in what the **Chinese** teach their children? What, in general terms, should determine a history curriculum?
- Knower's (student's) point of view: Is history too important to be left to historians?

Real-life situation/contemporary problem: What evidence is there about how dinosaurs looked and behaved?

- Knowledge issues: Are the methods of paleontology more like a science such as physics, or more like history?
- Format: Showing and discussion of a clip from the TV documentary *Walking with Dinosaurs* on how dinosaurs lived, showing a detailed scene from the life of a particular dinosaur, with a commentary presented as if this were a real scene.
- Knower's (student's) point of view: How far is it legitimate for TV programmes to go, to make their subject matter entertaining?

Assessment criteria

Using the assessment criteria

The method of assessment used by the IBO is criterion-related. That is to say, the method of assessing the essay on a prescribed title and the presentation in TOK judges each in relation to identified assessment criteria and not in relation to the work of other students.

- There are **four** assessment criteria (A–D) for the essay on a prescribed title, and **four** (A–D) for the presentation. For each assessment criterion, achievement level descriptors are defined that concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels (zero is the lowest level of achievement) failure to achieve may be included in the description.
- The aim is to find, for each criterion, the descriptor that conveys most adequately the achievement level attained by the student. The process, therefore, is one of approximation. In the light of any one criterion, a student's work may contain features denoted by a high achievement level descriptor combined with features appropriate to a lower one. A professional judgment should be made in identifying the descriptor that approximates most closely to the work.
- Having scrutinized the work to be assessed, the descriptors for each criterion should be read, starting with level 0, until one is reached that describes an achievement level that the work being assessed does not match as well as the previous level. The work is therefore best described by the preceding achievement level descriptor and this level should be recorded. In cases where a single descriptor covers two levels, a further decision is needed as to whether the work fulfills the descriptor to a greater or lesser extent.
- Only whole numbers should be used, not partial points such as fractions or decimals.
- The highest descriptors do not imply faultless performance and assessors and teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes, including zero, if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.
- Descriptors should not be considered as marks or percentages, although the descriptor levels are ultimately added together to obtain a total. It should not be assumed that there are other arithmetical relationships; for example, a level 4 performance is not necessarily twice as good as a level 2 performance.
- A student who attains a particular achievement level in relation to one criterion will not necessarily attain similar achievement levels in relation to the others. It should not be assumed that the overall assessment of the students will produce any particular distribution of scores.

Part 2 Presentation

A Identification of knowledge issue

- Did the presentation identify a relevant knowledge issue involved, implicit or embedded in a real-life situation?

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Level 1 was not achieved.
1–2	The presentation referred to a knowledge issue but it was irrelevant to the real-life situation under consideration.
3–4	The presentation identified a knowledge issue that was in some ways relevant to the real-life situation under consideration.
5	The presentation identified a knowledge issue that was clearly relevant to the real-life situation under consideration.

B Treatment of knowledge issues

- Did the presentation show a good understanding of knowledge issues, in the context of the real-life situation?

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Level 1 was not achieved.
1–2	The presentation showed some understanding of knowledge issues.
3–4	The presentation showed an adequate understanding of knowledge issues.
5	The presentation showed a good understanding of knowledge issues.

C Knower's perspective

- Did the presentation, particularly in the use of arguments and examples, show an individual approach and demonstrate the significance of the topic?

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Level 1 was not achieved.
1–2	The presentation, in its use of arguments and examples or otherwise, showed limited personal involvement and did not demonstrate the significance of the topic.
3–4	The presentation, in its use of arguments and examples or otherwise, showed some personal involvement and adequately demonstrated the significance of the topic.
5	The presentation, in its distinctively personal use of arguments and examples or otherwise, showed clear personal involvement and fully demonstrated the significance of the topic.

D Connections

- Did the presentation give a balanced account of how the topic could be approached from different perspectives?
- Did the presentation show how the positions taken on the knowledge issues would have implications in related areas?
- In awarding the higher achievement levels, the emphasis should be more on the quality of the consideration of connections than on the quantity of connections mentioned.

Achievement level	Descriptor
0	Level 1 was not achieved.
1–2	The presentation explored at least two different perspectives to some extent.
3–4	The presentation gave a satisfactory account of how the question could be approached from different perspectives, and began to explore their similarities and differences.
5	The presentation gave a clear account of how the question could be approached from different perspectives and considered their implications in related areas.