

4. Assessment

TOK assessment

The TOK course is assessed via two assessment components: the TOK exhibition and the TOK essay.

An important source of feedback on these assessment tasks is the **TOK subject report**. This is a report produced by the senior examiners after each examination session and it can be found on the TOK page of the programme resource centre.

Both of the TOK assessment tasks are marked using a “global impression marking” approach. This means that 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. The assessment instruments for each task can be found in the TOK subject guide and it is recommended that these assessment instruments should be made available to students.

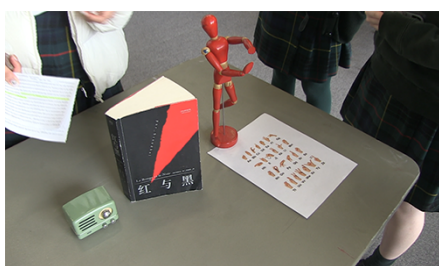
The TOK exhibition

The TOK exhibition focuses on exploring how TOK manifests in the world around us. Students are required to select one prompt from the list of 35 internal assessment prompts provided in the TOK subject guide. They then curate an exhibition of three objects connected to their chosen prompt.

An extremely wide variety of different types of objects are suitable for use in a TOK exhibition. Students are encouraged to select objects that have personal relevance or that link to areas of personal interest. For example, a student with an interest in fantasy football might select an object such as a set of fantasy football rankings or a set of football statistics, or a student might choose to include a personal item such as a photograph of a grandparent.

The student may have created the objects themselves, but they must be pre-existing objects rather than ones created specifically for the purposes of the exhibition. The objects may also be digital rather than physical. For example, students could include a photograph of an object where it would not be practical or possible for them to exhibit the physical object. Students may also use digital objects, such as a post on social media.

However, what is really important for this task is that the students select objects that have a specific real-world context—objects that exist in a particular time and place, including virtual spaces. For example, a photograph of a student's childhood teddy bear is an example of an object that has a specific real-world context, whereas a generic image of "a teddy bear" from an internet search is not.



It is recommended that students base their exhibition on one of the themes, either the core theme or one of the optional themes. This can help students to select their prompt and to narrow down their choice of potential objects, helping them to find a starting point for what can otherwise be a very open task with a vast number of possible approaches.

It should be noted that there are a number of different, and equally valid, entry points into the TOK exhibition. Students may begin by being drawn to a particular theme and prompt, and then find objects that exemplify how that question manifests in the world around them. Alternatively, a student may begin with an object of particular interest and then decide which prompt provides an interesting TOK lens through which to think about that object.

One useful strategy can be to encourage students to take an exploratory approach where they play around with different prompts and objects before making their final selections. However students choose to approach the task, they must ensure that their exhibition is based on just one internal assessment prompt and all three objects must be linked to this one same prompt.

The format of the exhibition

All students must be given the opportunity to present or showcase their exhibition to an audience. As this does not form part of the formal assessment task, teachers have a great deal of flexibility as to how they choose to hold these exhibitions.

Ten examples of TOK exhibition formats

1. A class of TOK students could hold an exhibition within one of their regular TOK classes.
2. A school could host a TOK exhibition evening for parents and other members of the school community.
3. A school could host a TOK exhibition event where students present to a panel of visitors from the local community.
4. A class of TOK students could host an exhibition for younger students, for example, prospective DP students in the school.
5. A school could host a combined event celebrating the Primary Years Programme (PYP) exhibition, the Middle Years Programme (MYP) personal project and the TOK exhibition.
6. A school could host a combined “DP core” event where students discuss their TOK exhibition, CAS experiences and extended essay research question.
7. Two classes of TOK students in the same school, or different nearby schools, could host exhibitions for each other to visit.

8. Students could display their TOK exhibitions in a “virtual exhibition”—by using an online gallery space.
9. Students could display their TOK exhibitions in a central public place within the school, such as the library or entrance foyer, to help raise the profile of TOK within the school.
10. Students could hold a TOK exhibition where teachers of other DP subjects are the audience and discuss the exhibitions with the students.





The TOK essay

Teachers play an important role supporting students during the planning and writing of their TOK essay.

Three formal recorded interactions between the student and teacher are required and these must be recorded on the TOK essay *Planning and Progress Form* (TK/PPF).

Three required teacher–student interactions for the TOK essay

Discuss the list of prescribed titles with the student.	Discuss the student's initial exploration of their selected title, for example, an essay plan.	Comment on one draft of the student's essay.
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The *TK/PPF* is not seen by the examiner when they are marking student essays. It is submitted to the IB and is referred to in cases where there are concerns about academic malpractice or concerns about the preparation of students for the TOK assessment tasks.

The *TK/PPF* has two key purposes:

1. To help ensure that students around the world are getting a similar level of help and support with their TOK essays by specifying three required interactions between teachers and students.
2. To help ensure that the essay is the student's own work.

Understanding the TOK essay assessment instrument

The assessment of the TOK essay is underpinned by the driving question: **does the student provide a clear, coherent and critical exploration of the essay title?** The assessment instrument then provides five levels of performance. These levels are to be seen as holistic descriptors rather than as a checklist of necessary characteristics and it is not necessary for every single aspect of a level descriptor to be met for a mark in that level to be awarded.

Key phrase from the essay assessment instrument	Additional guidance or comments
<p>"A sustained focus on the title"</p>	<p>The TOK essay is an exploration of the chosen title, so ensuring that the essay is tightly focused on the title is crucial. If this doesn't happen, the essay will be seen to lack relevance and will only achieve low marks.</p> <p>Common weaknesses seen in TOK essays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They fail to address the title, or that they begin well but then deviate from the title. Strong TOK essays retain a clear focus on the title throughout. • They focus on one part of the title but completely ignore another part of the title. Strong TOK essays ensure that they address all parts of the title, as well as considering any assumptions that are written into the title. • They fail to consider central terms and concepts used in the title, or alternatively where they simply provide lengthy descriptive dictionary definitions of these terms.
<p>"Linked effectively to areas of knowledge"</p>	<p>The TOK prescribed essay titles may refer to specific areas of knowledge or they may ask students to discuss a claim in relation to two areas of knowledge but leave the choice of areas of knowledge to the student. In both question formats, it is vital that students make clear and effective links to areas of knowledge in their essays.</p>

	<p>The term “area of knowledge” refers explicitly to the five areas of knowledge listed in the TOK guide: history, natural sciences, human sciences, mathematics and the arts.</p> <p>Sometimes students may wish to use an example or discipline that does not fit comfortably into an area of knowledge. While examiners are encouraged to be open to a variety of approaches, if a student takes this approach then it does require them to offer some additional justification or explanation for why they are using this example for that area of knowledge. It is therefore recommended that teachers advise their students against this approach, as it requires the student to make the case for why that example or discipline belongs to that particular area of knowledge.</p>
“Arguments are effectively supported by specific examples”	<p>The TOK essay requires students to undertake a critical exploration of the chosen title. It is therefore crucial that the discussion is analytical rather than simply descriptive and that students provide clear and coherent arguments that are supported by specific examples.</p> <p>The term “specific examples” means that the student, for example, makes reference to a particular artist or artwork or scientist or scientific theory rather than making a generic reference to “artists” or “scientists”.</p> <p>The examples in a TOK essay play an important role in supporting the argument. This means</p>

	<p>that it is not only the examples themselves that are important, but crucially also how they are used within the essay to support the arguments that the student is making.</p> <p>A common weakness seen in TOK essays is where students use too many examples and/or skip from one example to another without unpacking their relevance and significance and without showing how these examples support the argument being made. This tends to make the essay overly descriptive rather than analytical.</p>
<p>“Clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view”</p>	<p>The TOK essay should be a critical exploration rather than simply a one-sided statement of the student’s own viewpoint or opinion. To achieve high marks, students need to not only show awareness of different points of view but also to critically evaluate these different points of view.</p> <p>Although students are required to engage with different points of view, TOK students should be encouraged to come to their own conclusions. They should be encouraged to make a critical appraisal of different points of view and to be clear what their own position is; for example, they might agree with a claim with reservations.</p> <p>Within an essay, different points of view might take the form of claims and counterclaims or arguments and counterarguments. Students might, for example, discuss contrasting examples and different perspectives from</p>

different disciplines or areas of knowledge, or indeed from within the same discipline or area of knowledge.

