**TOK Assessment  
The Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course is assessed through two components: the TOK exhibition and the TOK essay. Feedback on these assessments is provided in the TOK subject report, produced by senior examiners after each examination session, available on the TOK page of the Programme Resource Centre.**

**Both tasks are marked using a global impression marking approach, meaning assessment is based on holistic judgment rather than summing individual criteria. The assessment instruments for each task are detailed in the TOK subject guide and should be shared with students.**

### **The TOK Exhibition**

**The exhibition explores how TOK concepts manifest in the world. Students select one prompt from 35 internal assessment prompts listed in the TOK subject guide and curate an exhibition of three objects linked to that prompt.**

* **A wide variety of objects are suitable; students should select objects with personal relevance or connected to their interests (e.g., fantasy football rankings, personal photographs).**
* **Objects must be pre-existing, not created solely for the exhibition.**
* **Objects can be physical or digital (e.g., photographs of objects, social media posts).**
* **Crucially, objects must have a specific real-world context—existing in a particular time and place (including virtual spaces). For example, a photograph of a personal teddy bear qualifies, while a generic internet image does not.**
* **It is recommended students base their exhibition on one of the TOK themes (core or optional) to help narrow down prompts and objects.**

**Students may start either from a theme and prompt or from an object and find a suitable prompt. An exploratory approach—trying different prompts and objects before finalizing—is encouraged. However, all three objects must relate to the same chosen prompt.**

### **Understanding the TOK Essay Assessment Instrument**

**The central question: Does the student provide a clear, coherent, and critical exploration of the essay title?**

**Assessment uses five holistic performance levels; not all aspects need to be met for marks at a given level.**

**Key Aspects:**

* **Sustained focus on the title:  
  Essays must remain tightly focused on the title throughout to avoid irrelevance and low marks.**
* **Addressing all parts of the title:  
  Essays should engage all components and any embedded assumptions in the title.**
* **Linking to Areas of Knowledge:  
  Clear, effective connections to TOK’s five areas of knowledge (history, natural sciences, human sciences, mathematics, arts) are essential.**
* **Use of Specific Examples:  
  Arguments must be supported by precise examples (e.g., naming a particular artist or scientific theory), not general references.**
* **Analytical Depth:  
  Essays should be analytical rather than descriptive; examples must be unpacked to show their relevance to the argument.**
* **Awareness and Evaluation of Different Points of View:  
  Students should critically explore contrasting perspectives—claims and counterclaims—rather than simply stating personal opinions.**
* **Encouragement of Critical Conclusions:  
  Students should appraise different viewpoints critically and clearly state their own reasoned position.**

**This assessment framework guides students toward producing focused, well-supported, and critically balanced TOK essays and exhibitions that demonstrate depth of understanding and engagement with TOK concepts.**

**Assessment Objectives**

Having completed the TOK course, students should be able to:

* Demonstrate TOK thinking through the critical examination of knowledge questions
* Identify and explore links between knowledge questions and the world around us
* Identify and explore links between knowledge questions and areas of knowledge
* Develop relevant, clear and coherent arguments
* Use examples and evidence effectively to support a discussion
* Demonstrate awareness and evaluation of different points of view
* Consider the implications of arguments and conclusions

**TOK Assessment Instruments**

**Global Impression Marking**

The TOK exhibition and the TOK essay are both 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 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.

When using the TOK assessment instruments, it is to be understood that:

* The described levels are not a checklist; it is the overall impression that is most important
* Only whole numbers should be recorded; partial marks are not acceptable
* The highest level of the instruments does 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
* Teachers and examiners should not think in terms of grades, but should concentrate on identifying the appropriate level descriptor and mark
* The IB recommends that the assessment instruments be made available to students

There are two marks available within each level of the assessment instruments. Teachers and examiners should award the upper mark if the student’s work demonstrates the qualities described in that level to a great extent—in this case, the work may be close to achieving marks in the level above. They should award the lower mark if the student’s work demonstrates the qualities described to a lesser extent—in this case, the work may be close to achieving marks in the level below.

If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, teachers, moderators and examiners should re-read the driving question that underpins the global impression judgment and then read the two levels again. The level that more appropriately describes the overall holistic impression of the student’s work should be chosen. If the decision is taken to place the response in the higher of the two levels being considered, then the bottom of the two marks in that band should be awarded. If the decision is taken to place the response in the lower of the two bands being considered, then the upper mark in the band should be awarded.

**TOK Exhibition Assessment Instrument**

The TOK exhibition is an opportunity for students to explore links between knowledge questions and the world around us. The assessment of this task is underpinned by the following single driving question:

*Does the exhibition successfully show how TOK manifests in the world around us?*

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.

**Please note:**

* If a student only provides images and accompanying commentaries for two objects, teachers should award a maximum of 6 marks.
* If a student only provides an image and accompanying commentary for one object, teachers should award a maximum of 3 marks.

| **Level** | **Marks** | **Descriptor Summary** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Excellent | 9-10 | Clearly identifies three objects and their specific real-world contexts. Links between objects and IA prompt are well-explained with strong justification supported by evidence. |
| Good | 7-8 | Identifies three objects and their contexts. Links to IA prompt explained, though may lack precision. Justification supported by evidence. |
| Satisfactory | 5-6 | Identifies three objects; contexts may be vague/imprecise. Some explanation and justification with partial evidence. |
| Basic | 3-4 | Identifies three objects; contexts implied rather than explicit. Basic links made but unconvincing/unfocused justification with superficial reasons. |
| Rudimentary | 1-2 | Presents three objects without stated contexts or uses generic images. Minimal or unclear links with little or descriptive justification lacking evidence. |
| 0 | 0 | Does not meet standards described or does not use provided IA prompts. |

**Possible Characteristics:**  
Convincing, Lucid, Precise, Focused, Relevant, Coherent, Adequate, Competent, Acceptable, Simplistic, Limited, Underdeveloped, Ineffective, Descriptive, Incoherent

**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.

| **Level** | **Marks** | **Descriptor Summary** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Excellent | 9-10 | Sustained focus on title linked effectively to areas of knowledge. Clear, coherent arguments supported by specific examples; implications considered; clear awareness and evaluation of different points of view. |
| Good | 7-8 | Focused on title with effective links to areas of knowledge. Clear arguments supported by examples; some awareness and evaluation of different points of view. |
| Satisfactory | 5-6 | Focused on title with some links to areas of knowledge. Arguments offered with examples; some awareness of different points of view. |
| Basic | 3-4 | Connected to title with superficial or limited links to areas of knowledge. Largely descriptive discussion; limited unclear arguments unsupported by effective examples. |
| Rudimentary | 1-2 | Weakly connected to title; relevant points descriptive or unsupported assertions. |
| 0 | 0 | Does not reach standards described or is not a response to prescribed titles for correct session. |

**Possible Characteristics:**  
Insightful, Convincing, Accomplished, Lucid, Pertinent, Relevant, Analytical, Organized, Acceptable, Mainstream, Adequate, Competent, Underdeveloped, Basic, Superficial, Limited, Ineffective, Descriptive, Incoherent, Formless