

May 2014

Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

Instructions to candidates

Your theory of knowledge essay for examination must be submitted to your teacher for authentication. It must be written on one of the six titles (questions) provided below. You may choose any title, but are recommended to consult with your teacher. Your essay will be marked according to the assessment criteria published in the Theory of Knowledge guide. The focus of your essays should be on knowledge issues. Where appropriate, refer to other parts of your IB programme and to your experiences as a knower. Always justify your statements and provide relevant examples to illustrate your arguments. Pay attention to the implications of your arguments, and remember to consider what can be said against them. If you use external sources, cite them according to a recognized convention.

Note that statements in quotations in these titles are not necessarily authentic: they present a real point of view but may not be direct quotes. It is appropriate to analyse them but it is unnecessary, even unwise, to spend time on researching a context for them.

Examiners mark essays against the title as set. Respond to the title exactly as given; do not alter it in any way.

Your essay must be between 1200 and 1600 words in length, double spaced and typed in size 12 font.

1. Ethical judgements limit the methods available in the production of knowledge in both the arts and the natural sciences. Discuss.
2. “When the only tool you have is a hammer, all problems begin to resemble nails” (Abraham Maslow). How might this apply to ways of knowing, as tools, in the pursuit of knowledge?
3. “Knowledge is nothing more than the systematic organization of facts.” Discuss this statement in relation to two areas of knowledge.
4. “That which is accepted as knowledge today is sometimes discarded tomorrow.” Consider some of the knowledge issues raised by this statement in two areas of knowledge.
5. “The historian’s task is to understand the past; the human scientist, by contrast, is looking to change the future.” To what extent is this true in these two areas of knowledge?
6. “A skeptic is one who is willing to question any knowledge claim, asking for clarity in definition, consistency in logic and adequacy of evidence” (adapted from Paul Kurtz, 1994). Evaluate this approach in two areas of knowledge.