

Theory of knowledge prescribed titles

May 2017 examination session

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 overleaf. You may choose any title, but are recommended to consult with your teacher. Your essay will be marked according to the assessment instrument published in the **theory of knowledge guide**. The focus of your essay should be on knowledge questions. 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 have a maximum of 1600 words, it must be double-spaced and typed in size 12 font.

1. “It is only knowledge produced with difficulty that we truly value.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. “Facts are needed to establish theories but theories are needed to make sense of facts.” Discuss this statement with reference to two areas of knowledge.
3. Should key events in the historical development of areas of knowledge always be judged by the standards of their time?
4. “In the production of knowledge, traditions of areas of knowledge offer correctives for ways of knowing.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?
5. Given access to the same facts, how is it possible that there can be disagreement between experts in a discipline? Develop your answer with reference to two areas of knowledge.
6. “Humans are pattern-seeking animals and we are adept at finding patterns whether they exist or not” (adapted from Michael Shermer). Discuss knowledge questions raised by this idea in two areas of knowledge.