

Using the knowledge framework

A common pitfall in TOK assessments is that the analysis isn't 'TOK enough' or that the knowledge questions (KQs) are not 'second order enough'. TOK analyses that are simply applications of AOKs ('What would a psychologist say about this?') or are merely first-order analyses (i.e. *doing* psychology, rather than interrogating the methods of psychology) will never score highly on the criteria. So how can you shift from first- to second-order questioning? The knowledge framework is one way of achieving this. This poster gathers the *general* KQs relating to the elements of the knowledge framework, but the TOK subject guide has a list of AOK-specific questions as well. If you are asking these types of questions and if you can clearly identify how the analysis of your presentation or essay relates to some part of the knowledge framework, then you are on the right track

Scope/application

- What is the area of knowledge about?
- What practical problems can be solved through applying this knowledge?
- What makes this area of knowledge important?
- What are the current open questions in this area — important questions that are currently unanswered?
- Are there ethical considerations that limit the scope of enquiry? If so, what are they?

Concepts/language

- What role does language play in the accumulation of knowledge in this area?
- What are the roles of the key concepts and key terms that provide the building blocks for knowledge in this area?
- What metaphors are appropriate to this area of knowledge?
- What is the role of convention in this area?

Methodology

- What are the methods or procedures used in this area and what is it about these methods that generates knowledge?
- What are the assumptions underlying these methods?
- What counts as a fact in this area of knowledge?
- What role do models play in this area of knowledge?
- What ethical thinking constrains the methods used to gain knowledge?

Historical development

- What is the significance of the key points in the historical development of this area of knowledge (AOK)?
- How has the history of this area led to its current form?

Links to personal knowledge

- Why is this AOK significant to the individual?
- What is the nature of the contribution of individuals to this area?
- What are the implications of this area of knowledge for one's own individual perspective?
- What assumptions underlie the individual's own approach to this knowledge?

The five elements

The five elements of the knowledge framework serve as a tool by which to *compare* the AOKs. You might, for instance, develop a presentation around any one of the questions, but explore the question in relation to two AOKs. In my view a comparison between two AOKs is *never* a mistake. The worst comparison essays are those which simply *juxtapose* the AOKs. ('History is like this... art is like this...'). It's far more effective to *start* with the framework and use one of the points to explore the two AOKs.

Writing knowledge questions

Students often find it difficult to develop informative and helpful knowledge questions in both the presentation and the essay. In many cases the students are trying to capture meaningful insights but sometimes this takes them beyond the reach of genuine questions about knowledge.

Knowledge questions must be:

- open (i.e. shouldn't be answerable by yes or no)
- general (i.e. can be applied to a number of different real-life situations)
- about knowledge

A good first step would be to identify what element of the knowledge framework you are interested in exploring, then tailor your knowledge question directly to that. This reminder could be used to help keep you on track when discussing knowledge or building a knowledge question.

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