

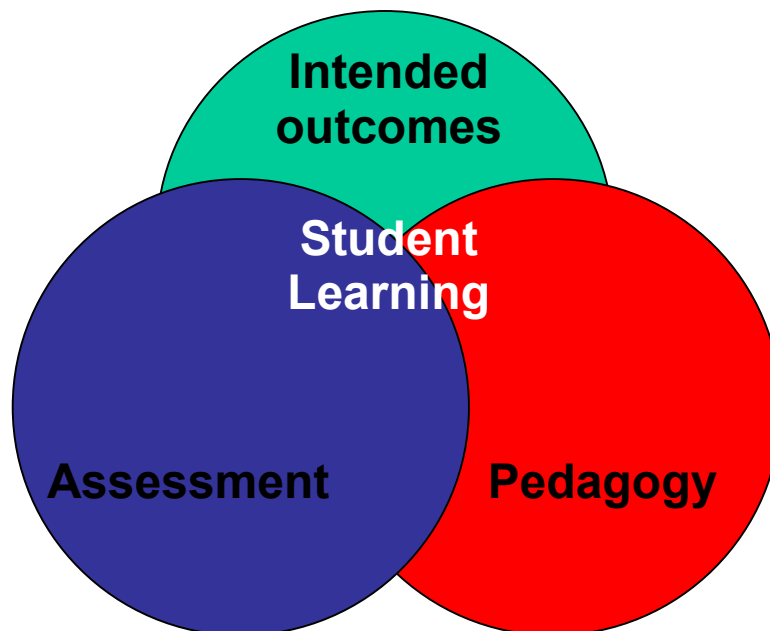
# THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

## COURSE FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

This Course Framework provides the basis for the development and accreditation of Theory of Knowledge courses and provides a common basis for the assessment, moderation and reporting of student outcomes in these courses. The Framework could also be used to develop courses in Philosophy.

Course Frameworks support a model of learning that integrates intended student outcomes, pedagogy and assessment. This model is underpinned by a set of beliefs and a set of learning principles.



## **Underpinning beliefs**

- all students are able to learn
- learning is a partnership between students and teachers
- teachers are responsible for advancing student learning.

## **Learning principles**

1. Learning builds on existing knowledge, understandings and skills.  
*(Prior knowledge)*
2. When learning is organised around major concepts, principles and significant real world issues, within and across disciplines, it helps students make connections and build knowledge structures.  
*(Deep knowledge and connectedness)*
3. Learning is facilitated when students actively monitor their own learning and consciously develop ways of organising and applying knowledge within and across contexts.  
*(Metacognition)*
4. Learners' sense of self and motivation to learn affect learning.  
*(Self-concept)*
5. Learning needs to take place in a context of high expectations.  
*(High expectations)*
6. Learners learn in different ways and at different rates.  
*(Individual differences)*
7. Different cultural environments, including the use of language, shape learners' understandings and the way they learn.  
*(Socio-cultural effects)*
8. Learning is a social and collaborative function as well as an individual one.  
*(Collaborative learning)*
9. Learning is strengthened when learning outcomes and criteria for judging learning are made explicit and when students receive frequent feedback on their progress.  
*(Explicit expectations and feedback)*

## **RATIONALE**

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is a way of thinking that explores the nature and communication of knowledge and related concepts, such as truth, belief, objectivity, reason, worldview, narrative and myth. It is also concerned with the similarities, differences and connections between various kinds of knowledge.

TOK discusses value and moral judgements and other related concepts, including ethics, convention, custom, cultural differences, equality, gender, equity, justice, tolerance, diversity and the aesthetic. Particular emphasis is given to the way in which language shapes and colours thoughts and experiences.

In a world of information and disparate bodies of knowledge, TOK provides a conceptual scaffold for students to integrate their learning. Students are introduced to the big questions of philosophy in a way that is continuous with their own lives and with questions, which arise from local and world events.

TOK respects the principle of connectivity by promoting synoptic understanding in the face of incommensurable knowledge; by bridging pre-theoretical understanding with

academic understanding and by connecting students' questions to philosophical debates, both traditional and contemporary.

TOK promotes critical thought, insight and analytic depth. The courses offer students the opportunity to develop the ability to make clear distinctions and present succinct and effective arguments in a coherent and precise manner.

TOK courses draw upon the variety of students' backgrounds as a means of affirming diversity as well as encouraging and exploring different perspectives in society. Self respect and respect for difference are conveyed through forms of regard which frame discussion: listening, collaboration and sensitivity to difference.

We are told by social theorists that we live in 'a world of multiple options'<sup>1</sup> dominated by consumerism and choice, a 'mall culture', in which young people face 'a plethora of selves' and a 'chorus of invitations'<sup>2</sup>. In a world of rapid change and radical plurality, TOK provides a framework for informed decision making and for holistic self-formation.

## GOALS

Course Framework Goals focus on the essential things that students should know and be able to do as a result of studying any course in this subject area. They are **intended student outcomes**.

All courses based on this Course Framework should enable students to:

- identify relationships between philosophy and enduring universal and individual dilemmas [eg Who am I? How might I live? What can I hope for?]
- reflect critically on knowledge and justifications for truth claims, and their own and others' value positions and worldviews to develop clarity in thinking and a healthy openness to new ideas
- recognise connections between contemporary questions and philosophical insights/frameworks past and present
- understand the nature of knowledge, especially in relation to language, culture, history and the self
- understand the source, limitations and lexicon of the various forms of knowledge, particularly the nature of the academic disciplines and their relationship to 'lived experience'
- develop a range of learning strategies that allow them to become active members of a learning community.

## GUIDE TO THE SELECTION OF CONTENT

Courses developed under this Framework will provide details of course content through the component units of the course. While this content will differ according to the particular course classification all (A, T or M) content will be chosen to enable students to work towards the achievement of the common and agreed goals of the Framework.

All courses will be based on the essential concepts and processes outlined below.

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<sup>1</sup> Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Middleton, J. Richard and Walsh, Brian, *Truth is Stranger Than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, IVP, Downers Grove, ILL, 1995.

## The essential concepts

The essential concepts of Theory of Knowledge are explored around classical philosophical questions:

- the nature of knowledge (eg empirical/evaluative): What can we know?
- philosophies of the self: Who am I?
- ethics and morals and their role in shaping our lives: How might I live? What might I hope for?
- knowledge as expressed through disciplines or fields of study such as sciences, mathematics, literature, history, politics and economics
- the nature of beauty and the development of an aesthetic sense.

## The essential skills

The essential skills inherent in Theory of Knowledge are:

- investigation and independent research  
*(location, selection and interpretation of information from various sources).*
- critical reflection  
*(analysis and evaluation of information, philosophical theories/concepts/perspectives and ethical issues and self evaluation/self reflexivity as an integral part of this process).*
- participation  
*(engaging with and responding to, both individually and collaboratively, the key concepts of the course).*
- communication  
*(presenting knowledge and ideas in a variety of forms and forums appropriate to different audiences).*

These processes are broadly those of Studies of Society and Environment, focussed specifically on Theory of Knowledge.

## Recommended content

In building a TOK course around these essential concepts and skills *it is also recommended that developers address:*

- theories of truth and reality: realism, non realism, critical realism
- the tacit dimensions of knowledge: biases, paradigms, filters and scaffolds
- the relationship between knowledge and language, culture, power and action
- what is knowledge for? The meaning of education, training, indoctrination
- the nature of the emotions; the relationship between emotion and reason, the education of the emotions; the place of the emotions in the search for knowledge
- the extent to which ways of knowing (eg emotion, reason, perception and language) are evident in areas of knowledge
- living with difference: pluralism, cultural relativity and tolerance
- truth and life.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

There are currently no vocational courses under this Course Framework.

## RELATIONSHIP TO KEY COMPETENCIES

A number of work-related competencies have been accepted at national level as being important for all young Australians.

These are:

- Collecting and analysing information (KC1)
- Communicating ideas and information (KC2)
- Planning and organizing activities (KC3)
- Working with others in teams (KC4)
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques (KC5)
- Solving problems (KC6)
- Using technology (KC7)

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate these competencies into their courses.

It should be noted that the Key Competencies may be approached differently in future because of the development of the Employability Skills Framework. Course developers should check the latest Board policy in this area.

## ACROSS CURRICULUM PERSPECTIVES

Nine Across Curriculum Perspectives have been identified by the Department of Education and Training as important societal and educational issues that cross curriculum boundaries. The Board has adopted these perspectives for inclusion where possible in courses of study at senior secondary level. These perspectives are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education
- Australian Education
- Environment Education
- Gender Equity
- Information Access
- Language for Understanding
- Multicultural Education
- Special Needs Education
- Work Education

Details about the Across Curriculum Perspectives and advice on how to use them are available at [www.decs.act.gov.au/publicat/acpframeworks.htm](http://www.decs.act.gov.au/publicat/acpframeworks.htm).

It should be noted that Across Curriculum Perspectives will be approached differently in future, following the review of P-10 curriculum, *Every Chance to Learn*. Course developers should check the latest Board policy in this area.

## PEDAGOGY

### Teaching strategies

Course developers are encouraged to outline teaching strategies that are grounded in the Learning Principles. Examples of teaching strategies that are particularly relevant and effective in Theory of Knowledge include:

- Presentation of issues in the context of ongoing and/or topical dilemmas in Australian society allows students to draw on prior learning and their own experience to propose concrete policies or solutions and to make and justify choices.
- In Theory of Knowledge prolonged discussion is pivotal and a range of methods to elicit, synthesise and employ discussion and active listening need to be canvassed.
- Group work and cooperative effort are part of the structure of Theory of Knowledge. Group oral tasks, role plays and reporting, formal presentations, seminars and activities such as camps and excursions allow students to extend their understanding in sustained communication with and to one another.
- Team teaching to draw on the range of available expertise within the school body and the wider community in the form of guest speakers should be actively encouraged.
- Maintenance of a journal as a less formal instrument for promoting dialogue with the teacher, and a more personal and continuous means of processing and reflecting on course content, should be actively encouraged.

## ASSESSMENT

The purpose of including assessment task types (with examples of tasks) and assessment criteria in Course Frameworks is to provide a common and agreed basis for the collection of evidence of student achievement. This collection of evidence enables a comparison of achievement within and across colleges, through moderation processes. This enables valid, fair and equitable reporting of student achievement on the Year 12 Certificate.

**Assessment tasks** elicit responses that demonstrate the degree to which students have achieved the goals of a unit (and the course as a whole).

**Assessment Task Types** (with **weightings**) group assessment tasks in ways that reflect agreed shared practice in the subject area and facilitate the comparison of student work across different assessment tasks.

**Assessment Criteria** (the dimensions of quality that teachers look for in evaluating student work) provide a common and agreed basis for judgement of performance against unit and course goals, within and across colleges. Over a course, teachers use all of these criteria to assess students' performance, but do not necessarily use all criteria on each task. Assessment criteria are to be used holistically on a given task and in determining the unit grade.

**Assessment Rubrics** draw on the general course framework criteria to develop assessment criteria for a task type and a continuum, which indicates levels of student performance against each criterion.

**Standard units (1.0):**

Should include a selection of three to four of the following structured tasks:

Research Essay, In-Class Response, Journal, Class work, Seminar

NB: No more than 70% of assessment should be Task Type 1 (See Table)

**Half standard units (0.5):**

Should include two of the following structured tasks

Research essay or In-Class Response, Journal, Seminar or Presentation, Short Responses

NB: No more than 70% of assessment should be Task Type 1 (See Table)

**Assessment Task Types**

Task Types	Type 1 Structured Response	Type 2 Unstructured Response
	Journal  Research essay  In-class Response (to specific text or issue-written under test conditions-may be creative or analytical)  Presentation/Seminar	Contributions to a community of enquiry (Goal 6) through:  Short written exercises/responses  Debates  Role plays  Group reporting  Facilitation of discussion
Weighting	60-70%	30-40%

**It is advised that 4-6 assessment tasks be completed in a standard unit (1.0) and 3 tasks for a half standard unit (0.5).**

**Structured Response Examples**

**Journal:**

- reflective piece of writing on issues raised in class (usually 300-400 words per entry)
- journal entries demonstrate understanding of philosophical positions, identification of philosophical issues, present clear and coherent arguments and engage with these ideas, exploring conceptual connections and exercising self reflexivity in relation to content
- written both in & out of class.

**In class response task:**

- a major piece of writing – (600 words) in response to text (could be issued the day before the task) and/or to a specific question given on the day of the task
- a clear rationale is expected if a creative response is chosen

- time allowed: up to an 1 hour 30 minutes

#### **Research essay:**

- a major piece of writing – (up to 1200 words) requiring background reading
- presents structured argument and articulates a position
- offers a bibliography to demonstrate breadth of research.

### **Assessment Criteria**

The following criteria for assessment and reporting of student achievement are a focus for assessment and reporting in all courses based on the Theory of Knowledge Course Framework. Criteria are the dimensions of quality that teachers look for in evaluating student work. Over a course of study they provide a common and agreed basis for judgement of performance against unit and course goals, within and across colleges. Teachers use all of these criteria to assess students' performance, but do not necessarily use all criteria on each task. Assessment criteria are to be used holistically on a given task and in determining the unit grade.

Students will be assessed on the degree to which they demonstrate:

- **acquisition and understanding** of relevant philosophical terms and concepts, such as the distinction between the empirical and the evaluative<sup>3</sup>
- **critical reflection** on and appraisal of ideas, positions and issues
- **ability to connect pre-theoretical understanding of philosophical issues** with academically acknowledged worldviews; recognition of the connections between contemporary questions and philosophical insights past and present
- **appreciation of the distinctive character of subject matter** as well as their integrated nature and the ability to synthesise ideas and materials from various sources
- **ability to learn in a collaborative manner** and to use appropriate language in a range of situations
- **use of appropriate research and reference strategies** to achieve these ends
- **effective and appropriate use of spoken language** in a range of situations.

### **Relating Assessment Task Types and Assessment Criteria to the Course Framework Goals**

Over a standard unit (1.0) or two half standard units (0.5) of work, the use of task types (structured response, unstructured response) addresses the goals of the course and the assessment criteria. Rubrics will clarify the relative importance of assessment criteria for specific task types.

### **Assessment Rubrics**

The examples included as Appendix A draw on the general course framework criteria to develop assessment criteria for a task type and a continuum that indicates levels of student performance against each criterion.

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<sup>3</sup> *Empirical*: based on facts or scientific evidence, relying on experience or the senses as the source of knowledge; *Evaluative*: pertaining to values, prescriptions and norms, relying on value judgements, or on judgements based on ethics, morality or aesthetics

## ACHIEVEMENT STANDARDS

Grade descriptors provide a guide for teacher judgement of students' achievement, based on the assessment criteria, over a unit of work in this subject. Grades are organised on an A-E basis and represent standards of achievement.

Grades are awarded on the proviso that the assessment requirements have been met. Teachers will consider, when allocating grades, the degree to which students demonstrate their ability to complete and submit tasks within a specified time frame.

The following descriptors are consistent with the **system grade descriptors**, which describe generic standards of student achievement across all courses.

### Unit Grade Descriptors for T courses

Grade	Descriptor
A student who achieves the grade <b>A</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops and presents clear sophisticated arguments.</li> <li>• Draws together significant implications and considers issues in depth.</li> <li>• Reflects active and sensitive reading of texts and contexts.</li> <li>• Shows integrated understanding of the most difficult subject matter.</li> <li>• Expresses ideas with clarity, insight and confidence.</li> <li>• Employs a critical distance.</li> <li>• Provides significant leadership in initiating and following through group activities.</li> <li>• Accurately and effectively engages an audience.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>B</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independently considers different points of view.</li> <li>• Confidently examines issues and positions.</li> <li>• Understands contexts and texts; argues coherently and assesses data.</li> <li>• Expresses ideas with accuracy and insight.</li> <li>• Structures responses with an understanding of audience.</li> <li>• Independently initiates and takes responsibility for group activities.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>C</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquires and uses most of the concepts and terms.</li> <li>• Considers different points of view when explained.</li> <li>• Attempts a critical examination of positions and issues.</li> <li>• Expresses straightforward ideas simply and clearly.</li> <li>• Organises ideas and materials; detects and corrects obvious technical errors.</li> <li>• Takes some responsibility for group activities.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>D</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws together the more easily perceived concepts.</li> <li>• Raises concrete questions with assistance.</li> <li>• Collects relevant data from simplified documents and acknowledges sources.</li> <li>• Uses some original, descriptive or narrative language.</li> <li>• Has partial control of technical aspects of language.</li> <li>• When encouraged initiates discussion of group activities.</li> </ul>
A student who achieves the grade <b>E</b> typically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has met the requirements for attendance and completion of work.</li> <li>• Has a basic understanding of concepts and terms.</li> <li>• Favours absolute statements and understands some straightforward ideas.</li> <li>• Uses plain, descriptive or simple narrative language.</li> <li>• Has limited control of technical aspects of language.</li> <li>• Is passive in group activities and class discussion.</li> </ul>

## **MODERATION**

Moderation is a system designed and implemented to:

- provide comparability in the system of school-based assessment
- form the basis for valid and reliable assessment in senior secondary schools
- involve the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies and colleges in cooperation and partnership
- maintain the quality of school-based assessment and the credibility, validity and acceptability of Board certificates.

Moderation commences within individual colleges. Teachers develop assessment programs and instruments, apply assessment criteria, and allocate Unit Grades, according to the relevant Course Framework. Teachers within course teaching groups conduct consensus discussions to moderate marking or grading of individual assessment instruments and unit grade decisions.

### **The Moderation Model**

Moderation within the ACT encompasses structured, consensus-based peer review of Unit Grade Descriptors for all accredited courses, as well as statistical moderation of course scores, including small group procedures, for T courses.

### **Moderation by Structured, Consensus-based Peer Review**

Review is a subcategory of moderation, comprising the review of standards and the validation of Unit Grades. In the review process, Unit Grades, determined for Year 11 and Year 12 student assessment portfolios that have been assessed in schools by teachers under accredited courses, are moderated by peer review against system wide criteria and standards. This is done by matching student performance with the criteria and standards outlined in the Unit Grade Descriptors as stated in the Course Framework. Advice is then given to colleges to assist teachers with, and/or reassure them on, their judgments.

### **Preparation for Structured, Consensus-based Peer Review**

Towards the end of each year, for each A, T and M course offered by the school, the Semester 2 assessment portfolios of a sample of Year 11 students which, after the ordinary application of criteria, is each typical of a required Unit Grade Descriptor, are sent to the ACT BSSS Secretariat. This material is considered at the first moderation day in March of the following year.

Towards the end of semester 1 each year, the same requirement applies for the Semester 1 assessment portfolios of a sample of Year 12 students. This material is considered at the second moderation day in August of the same year.

## The College Course Presentation

The package of materials (College Course Presentation) presented by a college for review on moderation days in each course area will comprise the following:

- A folder containing supporting documentation as requested by the Board Secretariat through memoranda to colleges.
- A set of student portfolios containing marked and/or graded written and non-written assessment responses and completed criteria and standards feedback forms. Evidence of all assessment responses on which the unit grade decision has been made is to be included in the student review portfolios. Specific requirements for subject areas and types of evidence to be presented for each moderation day will be outlined by the Board Secretariat through memoranda and Information Papers.

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*FAPCA* is the umbrella organization for Philosophy for Children in Australia and New Zealand. The aims and objectives include the drawing together of associations and regional networks and the promotion of their activities in the development and use of philosophical inquiry in schools. It has become standard practice that the executive of FAPCA rotates between states. The main responsibilities are to organise national conferences and Level 2 workshops. FAPCA is a good source of materials and links for other sites

Website: [www.uq.edu.au/~pdgburgh/FAPCA/](http://www.uq.edu.au/~pdgburgh/FAPCA/)

- **Journal:** Critical & Creative Thinking: the Australasian Journal of Philosophy for Children
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Towards a Liberal Education - Popper's Revolutionary Theory of Knowledge – Rafe Champion, from an article printed in Honi Soit magazine, University of Sydney, 1971 (website last updated 2004): [www.the-rathouse.com/poprevtheory.html](http://www.the-rathouse.com/poprevtheory.html)

Quotation from Peter Suber, author of Guide to Philosophy on the Internet:  
“Although I want to advance the cause of online philosophy, I want to keep this cause in perspective. My view is that online philosophy can and should be spectacular, the way great libraries are spectacular, but that it will always be secondary to reading hard books in quiet places and thinking and writing about them. Technology can only support this enterprise so far. In fact, though philosophy is easier to put on the web than art history or astronomy, I am convinced that the web can do much more for art history and astronomy than it can do for philosophy. The internet is a supportive service, like libraries, telephones, photocopying machines, and coffee urns. Perhaps it is a more fundamental innovation, on the order of movable type, rag paper, and artificial light. Philosophy is easier if these supportive services and technological innovations are more friendly and functional, but they should facilitate, not distract us, from our hard work. (See Ernst Cassirer's recollection of how a great library —the Warburg Library in Hamburg— helped him finish thinking and writing *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, in the Preface to vol 2, Yale 1955, at p xviii.) My purpose in maintaining this guide is to help realize the possibilities of online philosophy without exaggerating or underestimating their importance. For more reflections on these lines, see my essay, *The Database Paradox*. [[www.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/teachtoc.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/teachtoc.htm)]”

## **COURSE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

### **2004 Course Framework Development Group**

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The group gratefully acknowledges the work of previous groups who developed and revised the Theory of Knowledge Course Frameworks.

## Appendix A - BSSS Theory of Knowledge Course Framework

### Research Essay Standards Descriptors: Theory of Knowledge (T)

Name:..... Year:..... Topic: ..... Unit:.....

GRADE →	A student who achieves this grade typically				
CRITERIA ↓	A	B	C	D	E
Acquisition and understanding of relevant philosophical terms and concepts	Develops and presents clear and sophisticated philosophical arguments	Acknowledges and demonstrates understanding of existing philosophical arguments	Outlines philosophical concepts	Draws together more easily perceived philosophical concepts	Has a basic understanding of concepts and terms
Critical reflection on and appraisal of ideas, positions and issues	Draws together significant implications of philosophical positions and considers issues in depth	Independently considers different points of view	Outlines (identifies and describes) points of view and issues	Identifies one or more positions or issues	Favours absolute statements; shows little awareness of assumptions on which a position is based
Awareness of the integrated nature of subject matter through synthesis of ideas and materials from various sources	Shows integrated understanding of the most difficult subject matter	Confidently examines issues and positions	Summarises ideas and positions	Takes account of one or more sources of ideas	Understands some straightforward ideas
Use of appropriate research and reference strategies to this end	Reflects active and sensitive reading of texts and contexts	Understands contexts and texts	Provides an overview of contexts and texts	Uses one or more research or reference strategy	Bases position on assertions
Ability to distinguish between the empirical and the evaluative	Employs a critical distance	Distinguishes effectively between the empirical and the evaluative	Shows an awareness of empirical and evaluative perspectives	Makes one or more references to empirical and/or evaluative perspectives	Focuses on one dimension
Effective and appropriate use of spoken and written language	Expresses ideas with clarity, insight and confidence, with coherent structure and style and with a clear sense of audience	Expresses ideas with accuracy and insight, with appropriate structure and style, and with an appropriate sense of audience	Uses appropriate language in expressing ideas, with structure and with a sense of audience	Generally uses narrative and descriptive language, with fragmented structure or partial organization of structure and with a limited sense of audience	Limited control of the technical aspects of language; uses plain, descriptive and narrative language conveying own opinions
Ability to connect pre-theoretical understanding of issues with academically acknowledged worldviews	Makes relevant, clear and insightful connections between academic ideas and lived experience; shows personal engagement with philosophical ideas	Makes appropriate connections between philosophical ideas and lived experience	Shows awareness of the implications of philosophical ideas for lived experience	Relates one or more ideas to lived experience	Makes general assertions; shows little awareness of the connection between philosophy and lived experience

Definition of Terms: *Structure* – sequencing and coherence in the organization of ideas and arguments throughout an essay or an oral presentation; *Empirical* – based on facts or scientific evidence, relying on experience or the senses as the source of knowledge; *Evaluative* – pertaining to values, prescriptions and norms, relying on value judgements, or on judgements based on ethics, morality or aesthetics