



A Glossary of Key Words

This glossary contains key words that appear frequently in Board of Studies syllabuses, performance descriptions and examinations.

The purpose behind the glossary is to help students prepare better for the HSC by showing them that certain key words are used similarly in examination questions across the different subjects they are studying.

In classrooms, teachers of different subjects could use the glossary to help students to better understand what the examination questions in their subject require. Students should recognise the consistent approach of teachers of different subjects and get cues about how to approach examination questions.

For example, students would be better placed to respond to 'explain' questions if, in the context of different subjects, they developed an understanding that 'explain' could require them to relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how.

It is also important that the key words should not be interpreted in an overly prescriptive way. Teachers must ensure that they do not use them in ways that conflict with their particular meaning within subjects. To do this would be counterproductive. A term like 'evaluate', for example, requires a different kind of response in Mathematics from that required in History and this needs to be respected.

When using key words to construct questions, tasks and marking schemes, it is helpful to ask what the use of the term in a particular question requires students to do.

Key words are best discussed with students in the context of questions and tasks they are working on, rather than in isolation.

It is important to note that examination questions for the HSC will continue to use self-explanatory terms such as 'how', or 'why' or 'to what extent'. While key words have a purpose, they will not set limits on legitimate subject-based questions in examination papers.

Account

Account for: state reasons for, report on. Give an account of: narrate a series of events or transactions

Analyse

Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications

Apply

Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation

Appreciate

Make a judgement about the value of

Assess

Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size

Calculate

Ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information

Clarify

Make clear or plain

Classify

Arrange or include in classes/categories

Compare

Show how things are similar or different

Construct

Make; build; put together items or arguments

Contrast

Show how things are different or opposite

Critically (analyse/evaluate)

Add a degree or level of accuracy depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analyse/evaluate)

Deduce

Draw conclusions

Define

State meaning and identify essential qualities

Demonstrate

Show by example

Describe

Provide characteristics and features

Discuss

Identify issues and provide points for and/or against

Distinguish

Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between

Evaluate

Make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of

Examine

Inquire into

Explain

Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how

Extract

Choose relevant and/or appropriate details

Extrapolate

Infer from what is known

Identify

Recognise and name

Interpret

Draw meaning from

Investigate

Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about

Justify

Support an argument or conclusion

Outline

Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of

Predict

Suggest what may happen based on available information

Propose

Put forward (for example a point of view, idea, argument, suggestion) for consideration or action

Recall

Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences

Recommend

Provide reasons in favour

Recount

Retell a series of events

Summarise

Express, concisely, the relevant details

Synthesise

Putting together various elements to make a whole