



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Level Higher 2 (2027)**

# **Knowledge and Inquiry (Syllabus 9759)**

(For School Candidates only)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 The syllabus and examination are intended for school candidates who follow the Knowledge and Inquiry (KI) course of study at H2 level.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

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### **AO1** *Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge*

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge. They will be expected to show that they have read widely and have understood and can apply the concepts involved. Candidates will be expected to demonstrate skill in selecting relevant material with which to tackle the assessment tasks.

### **AO2** *Critical Thinking*

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate skills of critical thinking. They will be expected to analyse different kinds of arguments and information, identify and evaluate assumptions and points of view, verify claims and provide reasoned and supported arguments of their own.

### **AO3** *Communication*

Candidates will be expected to communicate their ideas and arguments clearly and coherently in good English. They will be expected to structure their arguments, and select an appropriate style of presentation. They will be expected to communicate responses which are fully relevant to the questions asked and demonstrate clear ability to engage with different aspects of these questions.

### 3 SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

3.1 Candidates are tested on 3 papers. Papers 1 and 2 are written examinations taken during the end of year examinations. Paper 3 takes the form of an Independent Study on a topic of the candidate's choice. All the papers are compulsory for students taking the subject.

3.2 Table of Specifications

Paper	Description		Mark Range	Weighting	Duration
<b>1 Essay</b>	<p>Paper consists of 6 questions in total:</p> <p>Section A covers the general theoretical aspects of the areas of exploration</p> <p>Section B covers specific applications of the areas of exploration</p>	<p>Candidates answer 2 questions: 1 from each section</p> <p>Candidates choose 1 out of 2 questions [Suggested range of 1000–1200 word answer]</p> <p>Candidates choose 1 out of 4 questions [Suggested range of 1000–1200 word answer]</p>	<p>Total 60m</p> <p>Section A: 30m</p> <p>AO1: 15m AO2: 10m AO3: 5m</p> <p>Section B: 30m</p> <p>AO1: 15m AO2: 10m AO3: 5m</p>	30%	3 hours
<b>2 Critical Thinking</b>	<p>Paper consists of 2 sections in total:</p> <p>Section A comprises an unseen passage on a theme relating to the nature and construction of knowledge followed by 1 question</p> <p>Section B comprises 3 questions from different areas of knowledge, with each question requiring candidates to evaluate the argument presented</p>	<p>Candidates answer 3 questions: 1 from Section A and 2 from Section B</p> <p>1 compulsory question [Suggested range of 400–600 word answer]</p> <p>Candidates choose 2 questions [Suggested range of 150–250 word answers]</p>	<p>Total 60m</p> <p>Section A: 30m</p> <p>AO1: 10m AO2: 15m AO3: 5m</p> <p>Section B: 30m: 15m × 2</p> <p>AO2: 10m × 2 AO3: 5m × 2</p>	30%	2 hours
<b>3 Independent Study</b>	An independent study or investigation	Candidates choose a topic related to the nature and construction of knowledge (2500–3000 words)	<p>Total 80m</p> <p>AO1: 30m AO2: 30m AO3: 20m</p>	40%	6 months

## 4 DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

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### 4.1 Paper 1: Essay

4.1.1 This paper gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of and ability to apply the concepts they have learned in their study of the nature and construction of knowledge. It is divided into 2 sections: A and B.

4.1.2 Section A covers the theoretical aspects of areas of exploration identified in the syllabus and the questions set will require candidates to draw on knowledge they have gained during their study of the following key questions:

- Why ask questions?
- What is knowledge?
- How is knowledge constructed?
- What makes knowledge valid?
- How is knowledge affected by society?
- How should knowledge be used?

Questions may not be set on these questions discretely, but may require students to draw on material from across the different questions.

4.1.3 Section B covers the application of areas of exploration identified in the syllabus and questions set will draw on applications of the key questions.

4.1.4 The questions will require candidates to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the nature of knowledge and how knowledge is constructed in the various fields
- apply their broader understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge to address specific contexts as required by the questions
- select appropriate material from the content of the syllabus and apply it effectively to address the questions
- refer to readings they have undertaken and use them to support the argument presented
- use language appropriately and effectively to communicate a clear and well structured argument.

### 4.2 Paper 2: Critical Thinking

4.2.1 This paper gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking skills by applying their knowledge and understanding of what they have studied to unseen stimulus material. The paper is divided into 2 sections: A and B.

4.2.2 Section A consists of 1 passage on an area related to the nature and construction of knowledge. The passage is followed by one compulsory question that will require candidates to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge in their critical analysis of the arguments, information and views presented in the text
- apply their broader understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge to address specific contexts as required by the question
- use language appropriately and effectively to communicate a clear and well structured argument.

4.2.3 Section B will present candidates with a variety of texts that will require them to:

- critically analyse different kinds of arguments and information presented in the material
- identify and evaluate assumptions and points of view, and verify claims
- provide reasoned and supported arguments.

### 4.3 Paper 3: Independent Study

- 4.3.1 This paper gives candidates the opportunity to select a topic of their choice, related to an area of the nature and construction of knowledge outlined in the syllabus that they have studied, and carry out independent research on that topic.
- 4.3.2 This paper will require candidates to:
- demonstrate their understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge as it relates to their chosen area of study
  - apply their understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge in addressing the specific context of their chosen area of study
  - select appropriate material from the content of the syllabus in addressing their chosen area of study
  - show that they have engaged in relevant reading during the course of their research by presenting a literature review and applying what they have read to support the arguments they present
  - use language appropriately and effectively to communicate a clear and well structured argument.
- 4.3.3 The selected topic must be focused and suitable for an in-depth study of 6 months' duration and candidates' proposals must be submitted to the Principal Examiner for approval before the study is embarked on.
- 4.3.4 The selected topic must be anchored in the syllabus and must allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding and application of the nature and construction of knowledge.
- 4.3.5 Headings, footnotes, charts, tables and appendices will not count towards the 2500 to 3000 word limit.
- 4.3.6 The Independent Study must be typewritten on A4 size paper; with double-spacing and in Arial font, size 12.
- 4.3.7 A complete bibliography of all resources used/referred to must be attached to the work.

### 4.4 The Approval Process for the Independent Study

- 4.4.1 Candidates must submit to SEAB the soft copy of their ***Independent Study Proposal Form*** (provided by SEAB) by a specified date in Term 1 of the second year of study. **Deadlines for submissions will be specified by SEAB in a circular to schools.**
- 4.4.2 The Proposal must include the following details:
- the research question/topic or area of study
  - rationale for the choice of area of study
  - the title of the Independent Study
  - a synopsis which states clearly the objective(s) and scope of the research area, as well as an indication of any potential problems or limitations
  - a literature review giving an overview of the current state of research and knowledge in this area of study
  - if applicable, a description of the qualitative and/or quantitative methodology to be used in gathering data
  - the proposal should not exceed 500 words.
- 4.4.3 The hard copy of the proposal must be dated and signed by both the candidate and the teacher. The hard copy should be retained by the school and submitted with the completed Independent Study by the date specified by SEAB (see para. 4.4.1 above).

- 4.4.4 Proposal submissions will be sent electronically to CIE for approval by the Principal Examiner.
- 4.4.5 If a proposal is acceptable as it stands, the Principal Examiner may approve it without further feedback.
- 4.4.6 If the Principal Examiner rejects a proposal, or indicates that a proposal needs to be revised before it can be approved, s/he will send feedback accordingly. This feedback must be retained by the school and submitted to SEAB with the completed Independent Study, along with the hard copy of the original proposal submission (see para. 4.4.3 above).
- 4.4.7 If a candidate has been advised by the Principal Examiner that s/he must make a resubmission of the amended proposal for approval, or submit a 2nd proposal, the candidate must do so by the date specified by SEAB, the hard copy of which must be submitted with the completed Independent Study.

## 5 NOTES FOR GUIDANCE ON THE INDEPENDENT STUDY

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- 5.1 The Independent Study submitted for assessment must be candidates' own work and should represent their ability to work **independently**. Nevertheless, all candidates will need support from their Centres in the form of monitoring the work in progress and giving some degree of guidance. The extent of teacher guidance is outlined in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.5 below.

### 5.2 At the Proposal Stage

- 5.2.1 Before candidates embark on the writing of their paper, at the Proposal Stage of the Independent Study, teachers are expected to:
- guide candidates in the selection of an appropriate research topic
  - guide candidates in the formulation of their research proposal and in interpretation of examiners' comments on their proposal
  - advise candidates on work schedule
  - advise candidates on research ethics
  - advise candidates on research skills and techniques
  - advise candidates on the suitability of resources/references selected
  - explain to candidates what they will be assessed on and how their performance will be assessed
  - draw candidates' attention to the importance of the declaration they will be required to make in the ***Independent Study Declaration and Submission Form*** (provided by SEAB).
- 5.2.2 During the formulation of proposals, teachers may guide candidates as required. This guidance includes discussion with the candidate of any feedback given by the Principal Examiner on the proposal, as well as proposal revision, or the formulation of a second proposal, should this prove necessary.

### 5.3 During Writing

- 5.3.1 The teacher will schedule a conference with the candidate, at the latest by the 4th month of writing.
- 5.3.2 The length of time required for the conference will depend on each candidate's needs. However, the conference should take place over one sitting. This means that Centres should schedule each conference in such a way that it takes place over a single session within one day.
- 5.3.3 Teachers may accept a draft of a candidate's work in advance of the conference, for discussion during the session, but teachers should not give any written feedback on the work submitted.

- 5.3.4 Teachers should encourage candidates to take notes during the conference, so that they can refer to these notes subsequently, when working independently.
- 5.3.5 At the request of a candidate, the teacher may schedule a 2nd conference. In the event of a 2nd conference being scheduled, the teacher will be required to complete the **Record of Additional Guidance** (provided by SEAB), giving details of key points of guidance given during the 2nd conference. The completed form must carry the teacher's signature and date.
- 5.3.6 The candidate should be given the opportunity to see what has been noted down on the form and should sign his/her acknowledgement of the additional guidance given.
- 5.3.7 The completed **Record of Additional Guidance** must be submitted with the candidate's Independent Study.
- 5.3.8 It should be noted that the nature and extent of additional guidance given may be taken into consideration during the marking of the candidate's work.
- 5.3.9 Should the teacher feel that a candidate would benefit from a 2nd conference, s/he may suggest it to the candidate, but it should be the candidate's decision whether or not to take up the suggestion.

#### 5.4 Acknowledgement of External Sources of Information

- 5.4.1 Candidates are permitted to seek advice or information from people outside of the school environment who have expertise that is relevant to their research. However, as part of their guidance on the ethics of carrying out independent research, teachers should advise candidates that it is not acceptable for them to either seek or accept help from any outside agency, including family and friends, in the actual writing of their Independent Study. The responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also permitted. Content produced by AI such as ChatGPT is not considered as candidates' own work, and therefore candidates are required to acknowledge sources used in their work.
- 5.4.2 Candidates must acknowledge advice or information provided by people or generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) other than their Knowledge and Inquiry teachers. They may do this through the use of in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes, or in their bibliography.

#### 5.5 On Submission and on Suspicion of Plagiarism

- 5.5.1 When candidates submit their Independent Study for assessment, teachers are expected to ensure that candidates have completed the **Independent Study Declaration and Submission Form** and attached it to the front of the work.
- 5.5.2 Teachers should also submit the hard copy of the proposal(s), along with any feedback given by the Principal Examiner, as well as the **Record of Additional Guidance**, if any has been given.
- 5.5.3 While teachers do not need to assess the work that is submitted, or check that requirements for the Independent Study have been fulfilled, nevertheless, they will need to read the work in order to satisfy themselves that it is authentic.
- 5.5.4 If the teacher is satisfied that, **to the best of her/his knowledge** of the candidate and the progress of the Independent Study, the work is authentic, s/he should sign and date the declaration on authenticity on the **Declaration and Submission Form**. It is understood that this declaration is made in good faith by the teacher and that ultimately, the authenticity of the work is the candidate's responsibility.
- 5.5.5 If the teacher has cause for suspicion of plagiarism in the work submitted s/he should circle '**reason**' [*to believe that the candidate has plagiarised work in this Research Paper*] and give details in an Irregularity Report (to be issued by SEAB) which should be submitted to SEAB, along with the work in question, including the candidate's approved proposal.
- 5.5.6 All documentation regarding cases of suspected plagiarism, proven or otherwise must be submitted to SEAB. The examining authority will take disciplinary action against any candidate found to have committed or aided the offence of plagiarism.
- 5.5.7 If there are no Irregular Cases, a 'nil return' must be submitted by the school.



## 6 ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 KI is assessed using band descriptors for the relevant Assessment Objectives for each paper.
- 6.2 The assessment of KI essay questions involves qualitative judgements rather than quantitative evaluation. Judgements on the appropriate band of each essay assessed will be based on the principle of 'best fit' determined by the descriptions within each band for each Assessment Objective.
- 6.3 In **Paper 1**, the essay in Section A carries a total of 30 marks, with the following weighting between Assessment Objectives:

Marks	Assessment Objective
15	AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge
10	AO2 Critical Thinking
5	AO3 Communication

The essay in Section B also carries 30 marks, with the same weighting as for Section A.

### AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge (15 marks)

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate produces a response which demonstrates:</i>
13–15	Comprehensive and insightful understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with a thorough exploration of the issues raised in the question and their implications, and with sufficient examples which are consistently relevant, effective and accurate.
10–12	Wide-ranging understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with an exploration of most of the issues raised in the question and their implications, and with sufficient examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
7–9	Generally sound understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with an exploration of some of the issues raised in the question and their implications, and with a limited number of examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
4–6	Basic understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with a limited exploration of some of the issues raised in the question, and any examples given are limited in relevance, effectiveness and accuracy.
1–3	A limited understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge without exploration of the issues raised in the question, and without examples.
0	No evidence of understanding.

**AO2 Critical Thinking (10 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate presents an argument which is:</i>
9–10	Consistently clear, logical and relevant, with thorough and insightful evaluation of reasoning, leading to an appropriate and well-justified conclusion.
7–8	Consistently clear, logical and relevant, with a thorough evaluation of reasoning, leading to an appropriate conclusion, with some justification.
5–6	Generally clear, logical and relevant, with an evaluation of some of the reasoning, leading to an appropriate conclusion.
3–4	Basically clear, logical and relevant.
1–2	Limited in clarity, logic and relevance.
0	No evidence of critical thinking.

**AO3 Communication (5 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate presents a response which is:</i>
5	Cogent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
4	Coherent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
3	Structured, using language which is generally clear, accurate and appropriate.
2	Basic in structure, using language which is generally clear, but limited in accuracy and appropriateness.
1	Limited in structure and relevance, using language which is unclear.
0	No evidence of effective communication.

6.4 In **Paper 2**, the question in Section A carries a total of 30 marks, with the following weighting between Assessment Objectives:

Marks	Assessment Objective
10	AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge
15	AO2 Critical Thinking
5	AO3 Communication

The questions in Section B carry 15 marks each, with the following weighting:

Marks	Assessment Objective
10	AO2 Critical Thinking
5	AO3 Communication

## SECTION A 30 MARKS

### AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge (10 marks)

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>In responding to the passage, the candidate demonstrates:</i>
9–10	Comprehensive and insightful understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with a thorough exploration of the issues raised in the question and their implications and with sufficient examples which are consistently relevant, effective and accurate.
7–8	Wide-ranging understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with a thorough exploration of most of the issues raised in the question and their implications, and with sufficient examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
5–6	Generally sound understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with an exploration of some of the issues raised in the question and their implications, and with a limited number of examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
3–4	Basic understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, with a limited exploration of some of the issues raised in the question, and any examples given are limited in relevance, effectiveness and accuracy.
1–2	A limited understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge without exploration of the issues raised in the question, and without examples.
0	No evidence of understanding.

**AO2 Critical Thinking (15 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate presents an argument which is:</i>
13–15	Consistently clear, logical, and relevant with thorough and insightful evaluation of reasoning, leading to an appropriate and well-justified conclusion.
10–12	Consistently clear, logical and relevant, with a thorough evaluation of reasoning, leading to an appropriate conclusion, with some justification.
7–9	Generally clear, logical and relevant, with an evaluation of some of the reasoning, leading to an appropriate conclusion.
4–6	Basically clear, logical and relevant.
1–3	Limited in clarity, logic and relevance.
0	No evidence of critical thinking.

**AO3 Communication (5 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate presents a response which is:</i>
5	Cogent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
4	Coherent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
3	Structured, using language which is generally clear, accurate and appropriate.
2	Basic in structure, using language which is generally clear, but limited in accuracy and appropriateness.
1	Limited in structure, using language which is unclear.
0	No evidence of effective communication.

**SECTION B 30 MARKS (2 × 15 MARKS)****AO2 Critical Thinking (10 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>In analysing the argument(s), the candidate demonstrates:</i>
9–10	Critical engagement consistently, with thorough and insightful assessment of the argument, and with a full and perceptive evaluation.
7–8	Critical engagement consistently, with thorough assessment of the argument, and a full evaluation.
5–6	Critical engagement generally, with general assessment of the argument, and an evaluation of the main points of the argument.
3–4	Critical engagement at times, with a basic assessment of the argument, and a tentative evaluation limited to only part of the argument.
1–2	Limited critical engagement, with a superficial assessment of the argument, and no evaluation.
0	No evidence of critical thinking.

**AO3 Communication (5 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate produces an answer which is:</i>
5	Cogent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
4	Coherent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
3	Structured, using language which is generally clear, accurate and appropriate.
2	Basic in structure, using language which is generally clear, but limited in accuracy and appropriateness.
1	Limited in structure, using language which is unclear.
0	No evidence of effective communication.

6.5 In **Paper 3**, the Independent Study carries a total of 80 marks, with the following weighting between Assessment Objectives:

Marks	Assessment Objective
30	AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge
30	AO2 Critical Thinking
20	AO3 Communication

**AO1 Understanding the Nature and Construction of Knowledge (30 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate produces a study which demonstrates:</i>
25–30	Comprehensive and insightful understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, making thoughtful use of a broad range of resources, with a thorough and perceptive exploration of implications, and with sufficient examples which are consistently relevant, effective and accurate.
19–24	Wide-ranging understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, making thoughtful use of a range of resources, with an exploration of most of the implications, and with sufficient examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
13–18	Generally sound understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, making efficient use of a range of resources, with an exploration of some implications, and with a limited number of examples which are generally relevant, effective and accurate.
7–12	Basic understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, making reasonable use of a narrow range of resources, with a limited exploration of some implications, and any examples given are limited in relevance, effectiveness and accuracy.
1–6	A limited understanding of the nature and construction of knowledge, making limited use of a narrow range of resources, without exploration of implications, and any examples given lack relevance, effectiveness and accuracy.
0	No evidence of understanding.

**AO2 Critical Thinking (30 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate produces a study which is:</i>
25–30	Consistently clear, thorough and logical, leading with insight to an appropriate and well-justified conclusion. Resources are consistently used selectively and critically.
19–24	Consistently clear, thorough and logical, leading to an appropriate and well-justified conclusion. Resources are generally used selectively and critically.
13–18	Generally clear, thorough and logical, leading to an appropriate conclusion, with some justification. Resources are used generally selectively and sometimes critically.
7–12	Basically clear and logical. Resources are used selectively only at times, without critical comment.
1–6	Limited in clarity and logic. Resources are used generally without selection or critical comment.
0	No evidence of critical thinking.

**AO3 Communication (20 marks)**

Grade/Mark Range	Descriptors
	<i>The candidate produces a study which is:</i>
17–20	Cogent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
13–16	Coherent, using language which is consistently clear, effective, accurate and appropriate.
9–12	Structured, using language which is generally clear, accurate and appropriate.
5–8	Basic in structure, using language which is generally clear, but limited in accuracy and appropriateness.
1–4	Limited in structure, using language which is unclear.
0	No evidence of effective communication.