NSW EDUCATION STANDARDS AUTHORITY • HSC STUDENT GUIDE

GLOSSARY OF KEY WORDS

The key words that frequently appear in HSC exam questions — and what each one asks you to do.

About the glossary

The glossary contains key words that frequently appear in HSC exam questions. Understanding these terms will assist students to better prepare for the exams. 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 different subjects.

Using the glossary in the classroom

Teachers can use this glossary to help students comprehend what an exam question requires. Understanding that key words have the same meaning across subjects can help students to approach exam questions effectively.

For instance, students can enhance their responses to *explain* questions by knowing that in different subjects, *explain* may require them to:

- show a cause and effect
- make the relationships between things evident
- provide why and/or how.

Key words are best discussed with students within the context of the questions and tasks they are working on, rather than in isolation. It is crucial to avoid rigid interpretations of key words. When using key words to formulate questions, tasks and marking guidelines, it is helpful to consider what a particular term in a question demands from students in terms of their response.

Subject-specific interpretations

Teachers must ensure that they do not use these key words in a manner that contradicts their specific meanings within subjects. For example, terms like *evaluate* require distinct responses in Mathematics compared to History. Students should be aware of each subject's unique requirements.

Self-explanatory terms

HSC exam questions will continue to incorporate self-explanatory terms like *how*, *why* or *to what extent*. While key words have a purpose, other subject-based questions will be used in the HSC exam questions.

A

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 in a different, new or unfamiliar situation.

Appreciate

Make a judgement about the value of.

Assess

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

C

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
- **Critically analyse**: use interpretation and reasoning to assess a range of evidence and make judgements based on detailed analysis.
- **Critically evaluate**: add a degree or level of accuracy, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to evaluate.

D

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.

E

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.

I

Identify
Recognise and name.

Interpret
Draw meaning from.

Investigate
Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.

J

Justify
Support an argument or conclusion.

O

Outline
Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of.

P

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.

R

Recall
Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences.

Recommend
Provide reasons in favour.

Recount
Retell a series of events.

S

Summarise
Express, concisely, the relevant details.

Synthesise
Putting together various elements to make a whole.

Source: NSW Education Standards Authority, *Glossary of key words*, HSC Student Guide — nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/hsc/student-guide/glossary