



آغا خان یونیورسٹی ایگزامینیشن بورڈ
AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION BOARD

Command Words



A Common List for All Subjects

Table of Contents	Page No.
Introduction	3
Cognitive Levels and Command Words	4
Knowledge	4
Understanding	5
Application and Other Higher Order Skills	8
Additional Words (Across Cognitive Levels)	14
References	15

Introduction

Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) uses command words in its syllabi to clarify expectations regarding the cognitive levels and skills which should be acquired by the students and which are assessed in its examinations. Each Student Learning Outcome (SLO) starts with a command word and is accordingly assigned one cognitive level. Moreover, these command words are also often used in examination questions.

This comprehensive list of command words has been produced to clarify the demands of each command word used by AKU-EB and hence align teaching, learning and assessment. It has been produced for use in AKU-EB's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC). However, it will also be beneficial for schools taking Middle School Programme (MSP) to create a smooth progression onto SSC.

Cognitive Levels and Command Words

Knowledge

This requires retrieving learnt information, for example, recall of facts and figures, terminologies, key ideas, concepts, etc.

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
1	Define	To give a formal statement or equivalent paraphrase that precisely conveys the meaning; examples are not required	All Subjects
2	List	To write down information in points. No explanation or sequence is required	All Subjects
3	Mention	To give a brief response, mostly as a word or phrase	All Subjects
4	State	To express in precise terms, with little or no supporting argument	All Subjects

Additional words that can be used to evaluate knowledge: who, when, where, what

Understanding

This requires associating new information to prior knowledge in a meaningful way, for example, by seeing patterns, organising parts, making links, summarising, finding evidence, etc.

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
1	Classify	To group information/ elements/ organisms/ etc. into categories with predefined characteristics or criteria	All Subjects
2	Compare	To mention the similarities and differences between two or more items, situations or phenomena	All Subjects
3	Comprehend ¹	To be able to understand an event, problem, situation or process	All Subjects
4	Contrast	To mention differences between two or more items, situations or phenomena	All Subjects
5	Describe	To tell in words (using diagrams where appropriate) the distinguishing features, relevant characteristics, qualities and main points of a topic, a given situation or a specific experiment	All Subjects
6	Differentiate/ Distinguish	To find dissimilarity between two or more objects/ ideas etc.	All Subjects
7	Discuss	To offer an account which is logical and balanced and include a range of arguments, pros and cons, causes and consequences which should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidences	All Subjects

¹ Used in syllabi but not in examination questions

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
8	Elaborate	To clarify or enrich given situations, statements or definitions, by providing relevant information (reasons, examples, etc.)	All Subjects
9	Enumerate	To name or to specify as in a list following a specific sequence/ order	All Subjects
10	Exemplify	To clarify a concept using appropriate and relevant example(s)	All Subjects
11	Explain	To give a detailed account of ideas/ situations/ problems or process with relevant supporting information (data, facts, examples, graphs, etc.)	All Subjects
12	Extract	To draw out the exact/ relevant information needed from the given content	All Subjects
13	Follow	To demonstrate an understanding of the given information, especially the required sequence of events	All Subjects
14	Formulate	To develop a plan or proposal and decide all the details of how it will be done	Sciences and Mathematics
15	Identify	To select the most appropriate object/ feature/ characteristics from many possibilities	All Subjects
16	Paraphrase	To repeat the material/ ideas of a text using different words	English

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
17	Recognise ²	To acknowledge the existence or validity of a claim or a situation by extracting or connecting information	All Subjects
18	Recount	To retell in spoken or written form	Languages and History
19	Relate	To show or make connections or association between two or more different ideas/ aspects/ quantities	All Subjects
20	Respond	To give a spoken or written answer to somebody or something	All Subjects
21	Trace	To give a description of progress, historical sequence or development from the point of origin	Languages, Sciences and History

Additional words that can be used to evaluate understanding: why, how

² Used in syllabi but not in examination questions

Application and Other Higher Order Skills

This includes multiple cognitive levels including application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and creation. It requires using information or concepts in new situations, solving problems, analysing relationships, relating knowledge from several areas, drawing conclusions, evaluating worth, using old ideas to create new ones, etc.

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
1	Analyse/ Critique	To break an aspect into its constituent parts. Look in depth at each part using supporting arguments and evidences. See how the parts relate to the whole	All Subjects
2	Apply	To relate, place and use an idea, principle, theory or law in a given situation	All Subjects
3	Assess	To make a judgment by considering available information and context, e.g. conflicting points of view, negative vs. positive, strength vs. limitation	All Subjects
4	Balance	To equalise the number of atoms on the reactant side to the number of atoms on the product side	Chemistry
5	Calculate/ Solve	To obtain the answer(s) using algebraic and/or numerical and/or graphical methods (working should be shown)	Sciences and Mathematics
6	Categorise	To divide into groups on the basis of specific features or characteristics	All Subjects
7	Complement	To harmonise/ balance the expression in an artwork	Art
8	Compose	To create something new by organising thoughts	Languages

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
9	Compute	To calculate by following certain standardised, pre-defined steps	Commerce
10	Construct	To systematically frame a concept, model or diagram by combining and arranging parts of given information or idea	All Subjects
11	Convert	To change information from one form into another form (one system or unit to another)	Sciences, Mathematics and Commerce
12	Create	To transform materials/ ideas into a new form	Art
13	Deduce	To reach a conclusion, by extracting meaning with the help of contextual/ diagrammatical/ structural clues	All Subjects
14	Deploy	To use or apply a skill in an effective manner	Art
15	Derive	To obtain a result or establish a relationship from a given/ specified source	All Subjects
16	Design	To conceive and produce a drawing of something	Art
17	Determine	To find or verify the causes/ value/ reasons etc. for an event/ situation/ equation	All Subjects

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
18	Draw	To make a diagram/ structure representing the asked concept/ system/ model/ phenomenon (including to scale for graphs and where specified)	Art, Mathematics and Sciences
19	Employ	To utilise the information gained	Art
20	Establish	To discover or prove that something is true	All Subjects
21	Estimate	To make an approximate judgment/ numerical value	Sciences, Mathematics and Commerce
22	Evaluate	To make judgment regarding a given information by identifying and discussing its convincing aspects, limitations and implications, taking into account the evidences available	All Subjects
23	Factorise	To resolve or break an integer or polynomial into its factors	Mathematics
24	Forecast	To calculate and estimate the future event/ value of something based on available information	Commerce and Geography
25	Generate	To create a report or a document according to the given criteria	Commerce
26	Illustrate	To clarify with examples (diagram/ figure/ accounting format/ graph/ character sketch/ sketching of a diagram)	All

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
27	Incorporate	To blend or combine different elements of art and design to create an artwork	Art
28	Infer	To go beyond the information given to identify what is implied but is not stated. To derive by reasoning or from premises of evidence	All Subjects
29	Interpret	To extract and make connections between explicit and implicit details of the given information and draw relevant conclusions	All Subjects
30	Justify	To support the given phenomenon/ event/ statement by providing valid evidences, reasons and/ or examples to reach the asked conclusion	All Subjects
31	Locate	To find a specified position or point on a diagram or map	All Subjects
32	Observe ³	To examine a process/ event and note scientifically/ systematically	All Subjects
33	Plot	To locate and mark one or more points on a graph by means of coordinates	Sciences, Mathematics and Commerce
34	Portray	To describe someone or something in a particular way according to one's own opinion	All Subjects
35	Post	To post given information in specified accounts/ books/ ledgers (used in context of general ledger) [Alternate words: Enter/ Make entries/ Complete]	Commerce

³ mostly used as a supporting command word in questions

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
36	Predict	To give an expected result of an upcoming action or event by making logical connections from given information	All Subjects
37	Prepare	To make something in a specific format, following a suitable procedure, such as making final accounts, general journal entries	Commerce
38	Prove	To establish the validity of an assumption/ fact/ law by using evidences	All Subjects
39	Rationalise	To simplify an expression by removing radicals in the denominator of an algebraic fraction without changing the value of the expression	Mathematics
40	Recommend/ Suggest	To give plausible suggestions	All Subjects
41	Record	To make the necessary entries in a set of accounting records; used in place of 'Enter' or 'Write up', e.g. Record a series of transactions in the cash book/ ledger/ books of prime entry (used for general journal entries)	Commerce
42	Rectify	To correct something that is wrong	All Subjects
43	Render	To depict/ execute the required skill	Art
44	Represent	To show given data/ information in the form of a graph/ chart/ structure or diagram	All Subjects

S.No.	Command Word	Definition	Most Frequently Used In
45	Retrieve	To find the unknown or missing figures from the given information and data	Commerce
46	Scan	To look through a text or image to locate a particular piece of information	Languages
47	Show	To demonstrate with evidence, i.e. working, calculations, experimentation or illustrations (including graphs)	Sciences, Mathematics and Commerce
48	Simplify	To reduce (an equation, fraction, etc.) to a simple form by cancellation of common factors, regrouping of terms in the same variables, etc.	Science and Mathematics
49	Sketch	To represent through a diagram or graph (labelled as appropriate). The sketch should give a general idea of the required shape or relationship, and should include relevant features.	Art, Mathematics and Sciences
50	Skim	To read speedily in order to get the gist of a passage	Languages
51	Summarise ⁴	To make concise by extracting key points and paraphrasing/ writing in one's own words	All Subjects
52	Synthesise	To combine elements of information/ ideas to create a new or larger whole	Languages
53	Verify	To confirm a hypothesis or fact using certain laws, principles or rules	Sciences and Mathematics

Additional words that can be used to evaluate application: show relationship, propose an alternative, prioritise, give reasons for, predict consequences

⁴ used on understanding level in all subjects except languages where it is used in application

Additional Words (Across Cognitive Levels)

These words are simple command words and questioning words which can be used across cognitive levels in all the subjects.

- Complete
- Explore
- Find
- Give
- Label
- Read
- Use
- Write

For Teaching and Learning Only

References

- 1- “*Answering the Question*”, *Oxford Advance Learners’ Dictionary* (2015)
- 2- “*Command Terms in the Middle Years Programme*”, International Baccalaureate Organisation (2010)
- 3- Robert J. Marzano and John S. Kendall, *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2007)
- 4- “*Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives*”, Epsilon Learning Systems
- 5- “*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*”, Benjamin Bloom (1966)

For Teaching and Learning Only