**Essay 3**

### Title: “There is no reason why we cannot link facts and theories across disciplines and create a common groundwork of explanation.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?

This essay title is tri-focused.

1. ‘No reason’ – debate between absolutism and relativism
2. ‘Linking facts and theories’ – is it possible within certain disciplines to establish facts i.e. in Religious Knowledge Systems, a religious believer will view God’s existence as a fact whereas an atheist will have a different viewpoint. Whatever one’s opinion it is difficult to establish God’s existence as a fact.
3. ‘Disciplines’ – how does one define disciplines? The make-up of Discipines changes over time i.e. In the 18th Century Economics was known as Political Economy – a mixture of Politics, Economics and Philosophy. Now Economics is a lot more quantitative.

**Introduction**

1. **Define the key terms and concepts in the title**: I believe the key terms here are: facts, theories, disciplines and explanation (although you could include reason also)
2. **Identify the knowledge questions that are central to the discussion**:

**Possible Knowledge Questions**

* Is there a strict delineation between the disciplines i.e. are the disciplines paradigmatic? The converse of this is ‘how does knowledge interact across the disciplines?’
* What conditions contribute to the emergence and decline of disciplines?
* Does the process of knowledge generation in one discipline influence the way knowledge is interpreted in other disciplines?
1. **State a position:**
* I agree
* I disagree
* I agree with reservations
* I disagree to an extent.

It is better to adopt one of those positions that are more nuanced i.e. I agree with reservations. Such a position expresses to the examiner that you have thought deeply about the question, and opens up your discussion to a more analytical focus.

1. **Identify the ways of knowing that are most appropriate to the question.**
2. **Sense Perception** – knowledge we gain through use of our senses i.e physical response of our senses to stimuli.
3. **Emotion** - is a WOK that transcends an accurate definition. Generally emotion is a relationship between your cognitive (thinking) process and a physiological stimulus.
4. **Reason**: Inductive reasoning is where observation leads to the discovery of patterns while deductive reasoning sees the researcher generate a hypothesis and test it through active experimentation.
5. **Memory** – a mechanism for carrying the knowledge we have gained – skills; past experiences and the shared knowledge we have gained throughout our life. Through memory we construct our self identity – issues of personal knowledge.
6. **Language**: The discussion here centres around the whole idea of ‘nature versus nurture’ – evolutionary biologists have long investigated whether the formation of our personality is dominated by genetic as opposed to environmental factors. Linguistics have long debated the origins of language acquisition i.e. is language innate or do we need environmental stimuli to facilitate the process of learning? The linguists/ social commentators Noam Chomsky (Theory of Universal Grammar & Language Acquisition Device) and Steven Pinker (The Language Instinct) see language acquisition as a passive process while other theorists like Skinner (Behaviourism), Tomasello and Ambridge & Lieven state that more active engagement in your environment is critical to the development of linguistic skills.
7. **Intuition –** a way of knowing and understanding that relies upon the capacity to read signals, clues and patterns, often based on previous experience.
8. **Faith:** be it a religious faith or faith in an ideology

**5: Identify AOKs that are central to the question**

I believe one has to equate the term ‘disciplines’ with that of AOKs (Human Scences, Natural Sciences, the Arts and Religious Knowledge Systems). Therefore, your essay should revolve around two AOKs in which the following themes can apply:

Possible Themes to your answer:

1: **Linking facts and theories across disciplines is a natural bi-product of knowledge production**

Issue of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – linking Human Sciences, History, Maths and Natural Sciences. For example researchers analyse the effects of PTSD on a community from multiple interdicsiplinary perspectives: historical narrative; effect of culture on how war veterans are treated; sociological methods used to re-integrate these veterans back into society; the representation of these indivdiuals in the Arts particularly film; and measures to develop clinical (biology) remedies for PTSD.

2: **Knowledge has been gained mostly through frame-breaking episodes.** (Knowledge acquisition is non-linear – civilisation has been driven forward through great jumps in knowledge i.e. Archimedes and his Eureka moment)

Due to its dynamic nature, knowledge can change from one era to another. What was regarded as a fact/theory in one time period can be falsified in a later period. These theories are known as **superseded theories** i.e. Aristotelian physics was superseded by Newtonian physics which is in itself being superseded by Quantum Mechanics (although this is debatable).

**Kuhn’s Paradigm Shifts** – author of the book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn defines a paradigm as "A [paradigm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradigm) is what members of a scientific community, and they alone, share" i.e. it is their worldview; what they believe. However, through the results of empirical research, criticisms of the paradigm can appear (when findings run counter to their accepted beliefs). These criticisms generate more and more pressure for change until the scientist eventually jettisons the paradigm in favour of a new paradigm that appears to explain phenomena in a more appropriate light. The advent of Keynesian macroeconomics is an exmaple of this. Up to the early 20th century the prevailing Classical viewpoint was that one should allow the market self-correct. Keynes, through analysing the effects of the Great Depression, saw a need for more intervenionist government policy-making in the economy – during times of economic recession the government should take the lead by injecting money into the economy i.e. priming the pump.

**3: The disciplines are social constructs; they change over time and can be culture specific**

I mentioned earlier that the nature (name) of some present day disciplines have changed. Even within a subject like Economics, there are many sub-disciplines that have more in common with other main disciplines than with each other. For example, Quantitative Analysis & Statistics mixed mathematics and economics while Behavioural economists would see their ‘discipline’ as a mixture between Economics and Psychology.

Some disciplines have disappeared or at least been given less prominence in society than they during the past i.e. Alchemy and Astrology. In addition, some disciplines like Psychology have only been identified as a separate discipline in the last 150 years. So there can be tremendous cross-over amongst disciplines in order to provide a common framework of understanding.

1. **Identify the significant claims and counterclaims**

**Claims** – what is your central arguments (perspective/point of view) which should run throughout the essay.

**Counterclaims** – do not fall into the trap of thinking that a counterclaim must be the polar opposite of your claim. A counterclaim can agree with claim but the difference in in terms of intensity i.e. to a greater or lesser extent.