



Higher Philosophy — draft Course rationale and summary

May 2011



This edition: May 2011, draft version 1.0

Published by the Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow G2 8DQ
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www.sqa.org.uk

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Course rationale

Background

All new and revised National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

In this Course, and its component Units, there will be an emphasis on skills development and the application of those skills. Assessment approaches will be proportionate, fit for purpose and will promote best practice, enabling learners to achieve the highest standards they can.

This Course provides learners with opportunities to continue to acquire and develop the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities as well as skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work.

All Courses provide opportunities for learners to develop breadth, challenge and application, but the focus and balance of the assessment will be appropriate for the subject area.

Relationship between the Course and Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles

This Course builds on the health and wellbeing principles and practice paper¹ as well as learning from a broad, general education.

Philosophy offers a new and different context to inspire, stretch and motivate learners² through the use of philosophical reasoning techniques. The thinking skills used in Philosophy help learners to develop as members of society who can express themselves confidently but also appreciate the values of others. Learners will become more confident in reasoning and develop greater self-awareness and understanding of the diverse views of humanity. These skills and attributes enable learners to become more effective contributors and support more responsible citizenship.

Purpose and aims of the Course

The main purpose of this Course is to challenge learners to think clearly about problems by asking questions about the world we live in. Learners will explore ideas and philosophical arguments relating to general and fundamental philosophical issues of relevance in the world today. Learners will develop the ability to use critical thinking skills and terminology to analyse and evaluate arguments and to develop their own reasoning skills.

Learners will apply knowledge and understanding of different themes, approaches and theories in Philosophy. Thinking, analytical and communication skills which are important in education and employment are developed throughout the Course.

The Course aims to:

- ◆ develop knowledge and understanding of philosophy
- ◆ develop thinking, analytical and evaluative skills appropriate to philosophy
- ◆ develop learners' ability to use abstract thought
- ◆ empower learners to challenge assumptions
- ◆ offer learners insight from the ideas of others which may be different from their own
- ◆ enable learners to communicate complex ideas confidently and in a reasoned manner

¹ Health and wellbeing principles and practice paper

www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/healthandwellbeing/principlesandpractice/index.asp

² *Building the Curriculum 3: A framework for learning and teaching* page 20

www.ltscotland.org.uk/buildingyourcurriculum/policycontext/btc/btc3.asp

Information about typical learners who might do the Course

This Course is suitable for all learners with an interest in using thinking and communication skills to explore ideas about human existence.

Learners will find that the Course provides opportunities to develop their thinking and communication skills and knowledge of Philosophy by extending breadth, challenge and application.

Philosophy offers learners opportunities to consider reasoned responses to topical and philosophical debates and promotes challenge and enjoyment in learning.

Learners who like to discuss and share ideas are likely to be enthusiastic about the Course.

Skills that are developed in the Course include: explaining and applying different philosophical ideas; constructing reasoned arguments for discussing and debating philosophical views; applying concepts from critical thinking and philosophy to analyse and evaluate arguments; analysing and evaluating philosophical positions using abstract concepts; and communicating views on philosophical questions informed by evidence from reliable, and referenced, sources.

Course summary

Course title: Higher Philosophy

SCQF level 6 (24 SCQF credit points)

Course outline

Mandatory Units

Philosophy: The Nature of Being (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

Philosophy: The Nature of Knowledge (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

Philosophy: Moral Philosophy (Higher) (6 SCQF credit points)

Course assessment (6 SCQF credit points)

This Course includes six SCQF credit points for 40 additional programmed hours to allow preparation for Course assessment. The Course assessment covers the added value of the Course. Further information on the Course assessment is provided in the Assessment section.

Course structure and conditions of award

The main purpose of the Course is to develop thinking skills. A central theme of the Course is to analyse how we think about difficult questions of life such as the nature of existence, truth, reality and what it means to be moral.

Learners engage with difficult questions of life and discuss, debate and analyse ideas to develop their thinking and reasoning skills. This contributes to developing confidence in reasoning.

Thinking skills used in Philosophy are developed in all Units and each Unit has a specific focus on developing and assessing particular aspects of thinking skills.

Units are statements of standards for assessment and not programmes of learning and teaching. They can be delivered in a variety of ways.

Philosophy: The Nature of Being (Higher)

This Unit develops the learner's ability to think critically about philosophical questions. Learners will acquire a set of philosophical skills which they can apply to a range of everyday and philosophical issues. They will consider diverse views of humanity and will be able to structure arguments using standard philosophical form and analyse the validity or strength of arguments.

Philosophy: The Nature of Knowledge (Higher)

This Unit develops the learner's ability to engage in philosophical questions about the nature of knowledge. Learners will be able to prepare complex arguments and contribute to discussion and debate. Views and reasoning will be developed by analysing and evaluating different philosophical views using evidence from reliable and referenced sources.

Philosophy: Moral Philosophy (Higher)

This Unit develops the learner's ability to analyse questions in moral philosophy. Ideas about what is regarded as right and wrong will be studied using examples from real life. Learners will select texts and sources to analyse and evaluate key philosophical positions in moral arguments. Learners will apply contrasting positions to moral issues and develop logically structured arguments to illustrate these positions and draw conclusions.

The Higher Philosophy Course has been constructed to facilitate a hierarchical arrangement with National 5 Philosophy (SCQF level 5).

To gain the award of the Course, the learner must pass all the Units as well as the Course assessment. The required Units are shown in the Course outline section. Course assessment will provide the basis for grading attainment in the Course award.

Assessment

Information about assessment standards for the Course will be included in the *Course Assessment Specification* which will provide full details including advice on how a learner's overall attainment for the Course will be determined.

Unit assessment

All Units are internally assessed against the requirements shown in Unit specifications.

They will be assessed pass/fail within centres.

SQA will provide rigorous external quality assurance, including external verification, to ensure assessment judgements are consistent and meet national standards.

Exemplification of possible assessment approaches for these Units will be provided in the *National Assessment Resource*.

Course assessment

Courses from National 4 to Advanced Higher include assessment of [added value](#)³. At National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher, the added value will be assessed in the Course assessment. The added value for the Course must address the key purposes and aims of the Course as defined in the Course Rationale. It will do this by addressing one or more of breadth, challenge or application.

In the Higher Philosophy Course, added value will focus on:

- ◆ breadth
- ◆ challenge
- ◆ application

This is assessed by a [project](#)⁴ and [question paper](#)⁵. The project will require research and critical thinking skills as well as application of understanding, skills and techniques from across the Units. Learners will undertake a project to research a philosophical question or issue, and complete a question paper, which will require demonstration of retention and depth of knowledge and understanding from Course Units.

³ Definitions can be found here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/45528.html

⁴ See link above for definition.

⁵ See link above for definition.