



# **Internal Assessment Report: Philosophy**

Sector Panel or SSC: Social Sciences

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

# National Units

## Titles/levels of National Units verified

DV55 11	Critical Thinking (3 centres)
DV56 11	Metaphysics (2 centres)
DV57 11	Moral Philosophy (0 centres)
DV58 11	Epistemology (0 centres)
DV55 12	Critical Thinking (3 centres)
DV56 11	Metaphysics (2 centres)
DV57 12	Moral Philosophy (3 centres)
DV58 12	Epistemology (3 centres)

## General comments

In general, this year's verification sample revealed that most centres were coping well with the delivery of the Philosophy Units, with only a couple of exceptions.

### Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking seemed to be mostly well handled. One or two centres experienced some high fail rates at Higher level. Where this happens, serious consideration should be given to the level at which candidates are entered. Almost all other centres tackled this by offering this Unit at more than one level in the same class, and some centres seemed to be using the Intermediate 2 NABs as a stepping stone to building competence at Higher level. Identifying the fallacies posed a little difficulty for a few centres, but assessors had no difficulty awarding credit for correct parts of an answer, even when other sections of the answer were wrong.

### Metaphysics

The sample size for the Metaphysics Units was larger than last year. Possibly because of the intrinsic nature of metaphysical topics, there is a greater need for clear definitions, well chosen examples and clearly thought out reasons. Some centres struggled slightly to get candidates to accurately define positions. A common mistaken definition of libertarianism, for example, was that libertarians claim we are free all the time — failing to recognise that libertarians need only accept that we are free some of the time. Some examples were also badly chosen and failed to make the point the candidate intended. Some, but not all, centres produced evidence which was lacking in detail for Higher level work. This was particularly true of the agnosticism topic, where marking tended to be overgenerous.

## **Moral Philosophy**

Most centres handled this material well, but there was a common tendency to miss out key details when outlining the theories of Kant and Mill. Quite a few candidates in the sample could only describe one formulation of the categorical imperative, and more avoided the distinction between contradiction in conception and contradiction in the will. This meant that when it came to evaluation, candidates had fewer theoretical points to exploit and criticise.

There could also be a greater use of the scenarios given in the NABs, which are there to help candidates illustrate the theories and unequivocally demonstrate their understanding of them. Most candidates felt safer bringing in standard examples and scenarios learned in class which were not always relevant to the situation under discussion.

The essays on Utilitarianism also sometimes lacked variety in their evaluation when there are so many potential analytical points to be made. For example, can Utilitarianism account for justice and rights? Should the happiness of animals be included? Is pleasure the only thing worth valuing? Very few centres explored such points or deviated from the standard criticisms.

The Emotivism section always seems to pose problems for a significant number of candidates in the sample, with many confusing it with a traditional subjectivism or ethical egoism.

## **Epistemology**

The Epistemology Units were handled confidently enough by most centres in the sample when dealing with the Hume and Descartes material. The Hume NAB on impressions and ideas appears to be answered more easily by candidates than those which focus on Hume's Fork, Causation and Animals, so care should be taken when using performance in this area as an indication of performance in others.

The same is true to a lesser extent with Descartes, where Meditation 1 appears to have more time given to it than the later Meditations. At more than one centre, candidates struggled with NABs focusing on God and the rebuilding of knowledge.

## **Managing assessment**

Although a greater number of centres dated their scripts than in previous years, this was still far from being a universal practice. Moreover, it was still uncertain whether verification was taking place in many centres, while others conflated verification with cross marking, which usually forms only part of the verification process.

## **Advice on good practice and areas for further development**

### **Good practice observed**

Among the many areas of good practice observed were:

- ◆ Feedback: a few centres gave exemplary feedback, which took the form of summarising 'Strengths', 'Areas for Improvement' and 'Overall Comments' on a cover sheet, in addition to comments on the scripts.
- ◆ Remediation: some centres showed evidence of high quality remediation, with weak areas highlighted and worked on prior to reassessment.

### **Areas for further development**

Areas for further improvement are:

- ◆ dating of scripts
- ◆ teaching the whole curriculum to facilitate using the full range of NABs
- ◆ moving beyond the standard criticisms
- ◆ internal verification that goes beyond simply cross marking and also includes checking that NABs and teaching materials in use are robust and up-to-date