



**National Qualifications 2012  
Internal Assessment Report  
Philosophy**

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

# National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

Centres were verified which provided samples of evidence for the following units:

F8K4 11 Critical Thinking (2 centres)  
F8K5 11 Metaphysics (1 centre)  
F8K6 11 Moral Philosophy (1 centre)  
F8K7 11 Epistemology (1 centre)  
F8K4 12 Critical Thinking (2 centres)  
F8K5 12 Metaphysics (2 centres)  
F8K6 12 Moral Philosophy (4 centres)  
F8K7 12 Epistemology (3 centres)

## General comments

The majority of centres had a good grasp of the National Standard. There were no major issues identified in Critical Thinking, although centres should expect learners to present their work as precisely as possible: explicitly highlighting and labelling premises, conclusions and hidden premises as required.

In Moral Philosophy the majority of centres were making sound assessment decisions with only a minority showing evidence of generosity in marking at Higher level.

In Metaphysics, those centres that had tackled the God option often produced candidates who criticised the cosmological argument by alleging that it was guilty of self-contradiction (because it appears to claim that every event has a cause whilst later postulating an uncaused cause.) However, there is room for more sophisticated analyses where better candidates might show an awareness of the *reductio ad absurdum* structure of some versions of the argument which absolve it from the charge of inconsistency.

In Epistemology, as in previous years, responses seemed to demonstrate that candidates have favourite parts of the text where they perform well and other parts where they perform poorly when a NAB happens to sample from that area. Centres should ensure equal time is spent on all required areas of the text.

With regard to all units, there was often evidence of internal verification going on but some signs that this is not always done thoroughly. For example, key conceptual errors often pass by unremarked upon by both the assessor and the internal verifier. Even arithmetic errors in totalling marks had been unnoticed by two pairs of eyes. In order to ensure a meaningful quality control process is in place, internal verification really needs to be rigorously applied by centres and they should either identify a subject specialist for this task or work collaboratively with another centre to ensure that this is done properly.

## **Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

A minority of centres did not appear to have familiarised themselves with the detail of the 2010 revised version of the course. The latest arrangements specify particular concepts which all candidates are expected to know, and this gives a clear indication of the level of depth required in answers at Higher level in both Epistemology and Moral Philosophy. For example, an 'A' essay on Kant should really make mention of detailed aspects such as 'contradiction in conception' or 'perfect' and 'imperfect' duties.

### **Evidence Requirements**

A minority of centres from the sample did not meet the evidence requirements and this was caused by using out of date NABs which pertained to an older version of the course. It is concerning that this sort of error is not picked up during internal verification. The rest used the most current NABs and marking schemes.

### **Administration of assessments**

This remains an issue that is handled inconsistently by many centres. Centres should ensure all assessment evidence is dated by the candidate or the assessor. This enables the centre to keep track of which NABs have been used on each assessment occasion. A different NAB should be used for reassessment or for candidates who need to sit a NAB on a different day. Well prepared candidates should be able to sit any NAB that they are given. Focusing on one area of a philosophical text and then assessing that one area gives candidates and assessors a false sense of their preparedness for external course assessment. So too does using the same NAB on different assessment occasions.

### **Areas of good practice**

Areas of good practice were observed where:

- ◆ different NABs were used on different assessment occasions.
- ◆ there was evidence of a robust internal verification or cross marking procedure where the different markers felt comfortable enough to disagree with one another and resolve key marking decisions.
- ◆ candidates were given developmental comments on the scripts themselves aimed at improving future performance and building confidence.
- ◆ scripts were clearly dated and indicated the NAB used and level.
- ◆ presentation of candidates at more than one level allowed for differentiation according to ability.

- ◆ feedback sheets were provided for all candidates in some centres, with individually tailored comments from both the marker and the internal verifier. Some contained excellent suggestions for further study and refinement of technique.
- ◆ marks were clearly indicated and designated KU or AE.
- ◆ the assessor had corrected errors where appropriate.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

Remaining areas of improvement concern:

- ◆ standardisation of written feedback to learners.
- ◆ ensuring that time is taken to do internal verification or cross marking properly. This includes ensuring that marking disagreements between markers and internal verifiers, and the agreed action, are recorded.
- ◆ selecting units for external verification that will be completed and reassessed in time for sampling in April. Not all assessors appeared to have been informed about this process.