

Our ref: TS/Philosophy/10/05

September 2005

To: SQA Coordinator (Secondary Schools, FE Colleges)
Directors of Education
SCIS
Customer Account Managers

**For the attention of all staff responsible for the
delivery of National Qualifications in Philosophy**

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

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Dear Colleague

National Qualifications in Philosophy

The contents of this letter should be passed to the member of staff responsible for National Qualifications in Philosophy.

Diet 2005

The Principal Assessor and Senior Moderator reports for diet 2005 can now be found on SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). These include:

- ◆ PA report Intermediate 2 and Higher
- ◆ PA report Advanced Higher
- ◆ Senior Moderator report National Qualification Units

Appeals

The procedures for stage 1 and 2 appeals were completed during September and October. Colleagues are requested to follow the guidance set out in the following documents prior to submitting appeals:

- ◆ *The Appeals Process: a guide for centres* (AA0690/3, June 2002)
- ◆ *Estimates and Assessment Appeals: Guidance on generating evidence* (A0992/2, April 2004)

Both documents can be downloaded from SQA's website.

The most commonly found problems in evidence submitted for appeals this year were:

- ◆ Evidence is partial and does not sufficiently represent the whole Course
- ◆ Evidence has been marked inconsistently and does not match the national standard
- ◆ Evidence has not been graded
- ◆ Evidence submitted does not reflect centre estimate.

These issues were reported in the last year's update letter and in the Principal Assessor's Report, however, similar problems were replicated in 2005. In addition, Examiners were disappointed with the quality of the presentation of evidence from some centres. This related to uncoordinated evidence such as several pieces of evidence for each candidate with no clear or direct link to the assessment instrument.

Centres should note that the above problems may disadvantage candidates and staff are encouraged to read the Principal Assessor Reports.

Marking Instructions

The finalised marking instructions for Diet 2005 Course assessments at each level are posted on the Philosophy web page. It is hoped that these will be of benefit to staff when preparing a prelim paper or when submitting evidence in the event of making appeals.

National Qualifications Review

The Review of Philosophy Courses is now complete and the Specimen Question Paper and National Assessment Bank packs are currently being written and will be available at the Launch seminars in November. Arrangement Documents will be published on the Philosophy page of the SQA website (www.sqa.org.uk) prior to the seminars. Two seminars are planned — the first in Stirling on 22 November and the second in Glasgow on 24 November. Details of these are in centres and staff should register for the seminar of their choice.

The major issues addressed in the review were:

- ◆ the lack of progression between Intermediate 2 and Higher
- ◆ the large number of options available within each Unit
- ◆ the reduction of internal assessment.

Each of these issues have been addressed and the structure of the revised Courses at both levels is as follows:

- ◆ *Critical Thinking in Philosophy* (0.5 credit)
- ◆ *Metaphysics* (0.5 credit) (Choice from two options)
- ◆ *Epistemology* (1 credit) (Mandatory section followed by a choice from 2 options)
- ◆ *Moral Philosophy* (1 credit) (all content mandatory).

This reduces the content to be taught and assessed and makes the Course assessment much less predictable. A brief summary of the content for the Higher Course is given as an Appendix to this letter.

Logic (Higher) will remain as a free-standing Unit.

Assessment Panel

The remit and make-up of the Social Sciences Assessment Panel has been reviewed with the result that there are now more representatives for each subject — psychology; sociology; philosophy; politics. The Social Sciences Assessment Panel continues to meet twice a year to look at issues arising in the assessment of Social Science Subjects. Colleagues are free to feed issues arising in their subject to the Panel either directly through panel members or via SQA officers.

Marking for SQA

Each year the number of entries for the Philosophy Courses are increasing. If you are interested in becoming a marker in Philosophy, an application form can be downloaded from SQA's website (www.sqa.org.uk). Alternatively, please contact us on 0131-561 6825 and we will send a form to you. To become a Marker, we normally ask that you have taught the Course for at least three years, preferably within the past three years. We welcome applications throughout the year and, where a suitable vacancy exists, we may be able to offer an appointment for this year. In 2007, the first diet of the revised Course papers will be Centrally Marked — this entails the marker marking scripts over one extended period in the same venue. In a number of subject areas we have had recent examples where the results in centres have improved dramatically after a member of staff joined the marking team. The experience of marking helps to increase the awareness of the demands of Course assessment and is proven to be excellent professional and personal development.

I hope that you find the above information useful. If you would like to discuss any matter in more detail, please do not hesitate to telephone me on 0141-242 2343 or e-mail tom.stannage@sqa.org.uk

Yours faithfully,



Tom Stannage
Qualifications Manager
NQ Social Sciences

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Summary of content of revised Higher Course

Critical Thinking in Philosophy (0.5 credit)

1. Understanding the Nature of Arguments

The purpose of an argument

Distinction between statements and arguments

Types of Reasoning

Argument structure

2. Reliable and Unreliable Arguments

Valid Arguments

Sound Arguments

Fallacious Reasoning

Metaphysics (0.5 credit)

ALL candidates must study **EITHER** Debate One **OR** Debate Two.

Debate One: Is there a rational basis for belief in God?

- a) The universe requires an ultimate explanation
- b) Apparent order and purpose in the universe requires an explanation
- c) It is impossible to decide if God exists:

Debate Two: Do we have free will?

- a) Human experience of a sense of choice implies we have free will
- b) Moral accountability presupposes that we have free will
- c) The causal principles implies that our choices are predetermined
- d) Free will as freedom from constraint

Epistemology (1 credit)

Section 1 - Mandatory

a) Topic A - Introduction - Why are knowledge claims a problem in philosophy?

Appearance and Reality
Belief, Knowledge and Certainty

b) Topic B - What is knowledge?

The distinction between knowing 'how' and knowing 'that'

The Tripartite Theory of Knowledge

Problems with the Tripartite Theory

c) Topic C: Can knowledge claims be justified?

The central claims of empiricism and rationalism will be studied.

Section Two

There is a choice of option in Section Two. All candidates must investigate **ONE** of the following options:

EITHER

The study of a rationalist epistemological position through an examination of key extracts from the writings of René Descartes.

OR

The study of an empiricist epistemological position through an examination of key extracts from the writings of David Hume.

By examining key extracts from the writings of the chosen philosopher, candidates will be able to identify the reasoning and assumptions which give rise to the standard positions of either rationalism or empiricism. Candidates must not simply learn to describe the ideas of the chosen philosopher. They must also develop the ability to identify key stages, key assumptions and weaknesses in the chosen philosopher's position. **For this reason, it is essential that candidates explain and, where appropriate criticise, the stages of reasoning and the assumptions which are present in each of the extracts prescribed in this Section.**

Moral Philosophy (1 credit)

Section 1

A) Utilitarianism as an example of a consequentialist theory

Consequentialist approaches to ethics

B) Kant's moral theory as an example of a deontological theory

Deontological approaches to ethics

Section Two: Emotivism

Candidates are introduced to one specific meta-ethical issue concerning the nature of moral statements. They study the linguistic issue of what we are doing (**i.e. what 'speech act' we perform**) when we claim that an action is right or wrong. To provide a focus for this study candidates investigate the question 'What are we doing when we claim that an action is morally right?' They then investigate the emotivist response to this question.