



National Qualifications 2013 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:

F8K4 11 Critical Thinking
F8K5 11 Metaphysics
F8K6 11 Moral Philosophy
F8K4 12 Critical Thinking
F8K6 12 Moral Philosophy
F8K7 12 Epistemology

General comments

The majority of centres had a good grasp of the national standard.

There were some issues in Critical Thinking. The foremost of these was inaccuracy in defining key terms in Critical Thinking. The glossary, listed in the Statement of Standards section of the Unit specification, gives the standard definitions expected for each level and centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with these. For example, imprecise descriptions of validity and soundness were often awarded marks. A sound argument must, first of all, be valid and contain true premises and conclusion.

Tightening up on the examples given for sound arguments is also recommended.

In Epistemology, results were mixed. As in previous years, responses seemed to demonstrate that certain parts of the texts are well understood whereas in other areas, for example in Descartes' Meditation 6, candidates perform poorly. Centres should ensure that equal time is spent on all required areas of the text.

In Metaphysics, centres made sound assessment judgements. However, candidates should be encouraged to explain arguments presented in standard form, as this shows a level of understanding.

In Moral Philosophy, centres should strive for precision in the use of key terms and explanations. For example, in Kantianism, candidates should be familiar with the process of using the Categorical Imperative and of key stages in this, such as instances of contradiction in conception, contradiction in the will, perfect and imperfect duties. Centres should ensure that candidates are encouraged to explain and comment on case studies when these are presented.

A few centres gave specific, individualised feedback to candidates, indicating strengths of their existing knowledge and detailed goals for further learning. This kind of feedback is to be encouraged, as it enables summative assessment to aid the development of skills, with a view to the external Course assessment and beyond.

With regard to all Units, there was often evidence of internal verification and, where this was present, it was completed to a high standard.

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

The majority of centres appeared to have familiarised themselves with the latest Unit specifications and requirements for assessment. A minority were not entirely cognisant of the specific conditions of assessment for NABs or had not adhered closely enough to the marking schemes. The Arrangements documents and NABs specify these aspects and centres should ensure these are thoroughly understood.

Evidence Requirements

Clearer indication of where marks have been allocated is necessary. Ticks do not always correspond to the number of marks awarded. Precise indication of marks allows the candidate to gauge personal performance and build on any gaps in knowledge in preparation for the external Course assessment.

Administration of assessments

This remains an issue that is inconsistent across centres. Centres must ensure that candidate evidence is dated and the NAB number indicated. This enables the centre to keep track of which NAB has been used on each occasion. A different NAB should be used for re-assessment or for candidates who need to sit a NAB on a different day. Well prepared candidates should be able to sit any NAB presented to them. Focusing on one area in particular, and then assessing candidates in that area only, gives a false sense of their readiness for the external Course assessment. This is also true of using the same NAB on different assessment occasions.

As indicated in the arrangements for assessment, each NAB should be completed in one sitting, not over two or more occasions and, in general, closer adherence should be paid to the marking schemes for the NABs.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Evidence of robust internal verification or cross-marking.
- ◆ Some excellent individualised feedback and specific goals given to candidates. Feedback is given on the scripts which is encouraging and helpful for candidates. The use of clearly set out feedback sheets is excellent practice.
- ◆ Marks are clearly indicated on all scripts.
- ◆ Scripts clearly indicate which instrument of assessment has been used, which is excellent practice and helpful for both markers and verifiers.
- ◆ Scripts were clearly dated.
- ◆ Marks were clearly indicated and designated KU or AE.

- ◆ The assessor had corrected errors or pointed candidates in the direction of specific sources to correct errors.

Specific areas for improvement

Candidates must be familiar with the definitions and key terms given in the glossary of the Critical Thinking Unit.

Centres must give equal teaching time to all areas of text in the Epistemology Unit.

Centres must adhere to the conditions of assessment as specified in the NAB packs and marking guidance.