

Higher National Unit Specification

General information for centres

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Unit code: DP4A 35

Unit purpose: This unit aims to develop knowledge and understanding of classical and contemporary theories of morality. It introduces candidates to the philosophical study of ethics and meta-ethics and develops the candidate's skills in applying these concepts to a contemporary ethical issue.

On completion of the Unit, the candidate will be able to:

1. Distinguish normative and meta-ethical theories of morality.
2. Analyse contrasting moral theories in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Evaluate contrasting moral theories with reference to a contemporary ethical problem or issue.

Credit points and level: 1 HN Credit at SCQF level 8: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 8*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

Recommended prior knowledge and skills: Candidates should possess good communication skills. Other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the Unit would be beneficial.

In addition, candidates should normally have achieved HN Unit DP47 34 *Philosophy A: Evaluating Philosophical Issues in the Social Sciences*, HN Unit DP48 34 *Philosophy B: Aspects of the History and Development of Western Philosophy* and HN Unit DP49 35 *Philosophy C: An Introduction to Analytic Philosophy*.

However, this unit could be taken as a freestanding unit and ultimately, entry is at the discretion of the centre.

Core skills: There will be opportunities to gather evidence towards core skills in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of core skills or core skills components. Further detail is provided in the Support Notes.

Context for delivery: If this Unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes. This unit is included in the framework of the HNC/D Social Sciences.

General information for centres (cont)

Assessment: This unit will be holistically assessed by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of one open book essay/report of 2000 – 3000 words. The assessment topic should be handed out or negotiated at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit and a submission date set. A feedback session with the candidate should ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards

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The sections of the Unit stating the Outcomes, knowledge and/or skills, and evidence requirements are mandatory.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and/or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Candidates should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Distinguish normative and meta-ethical theories of morality.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ The distinction between normative and meta-ethical theories
- ◆ The relationship between meta-ethical stances and normative stances
- ◆ Normative or ‘first order’ theories such as: Deontological theories (e.g. Kantian ethics; Theological moral realism); Consequentialist theories (e.g. Act and Rule Utilitarianism; Ethical egoism)
- ◆ Meta-ethical or ‘second order’ theories such as: Cognitive theories (e.g. Naturalism; Intuitionism); Non-cognitive theories (e.g. Emotivism; Prescriptivism)

Evidence requirements

Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ accurately distinguish normative and meta-ethical theories
- ◆ explain the relationship between meta-ethical stances and normative stances
- ◆ accurately outline two contrasting moral theories

Assessment guidelines

Outcome 1 will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 2 and 3. The details of the assessment can be found under Outcome 3.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Outcome 2

Analyse contrasting moral theories in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Central concepts of contrasting normative or meta ethical moral theories identified
- ◆ Central concepts of contrasting normative or meta ethical moral theories explained
- ◆ Strengths and weaknesses pertaining to contrasting normative or meta ethical moral theories

Evidence requirements

Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ analyse contrasting moral theories by identifying and explaining the central concepts
- ◆ explain the strengths and weaknesses of contrasting moral theories

Assessment guidelines

Outcome 2 will be assessed in conjunction with Outcomes 1 and 3. The details of the assessment can be found under Outcome 3.

Outcome 3

Evaluate contrasting moral theories with reference to a contemporary ethical problem or issue.

Knowledge and/or skills

- ◆ Contrasting moral theories are identified with reference to an exponent of each theory
- ◆ Moral theories are applied to an appropriate ethical problem or issue
- ◆ Possible solutions/approaches to the problem or issue, suggested by each theory are outlined
- ◆ The effectiveness of each theory at dealing with the problem or issue is evaluated

Evidence requirements

Each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge and/or skills by showing that he/she can:

- ◆ identify contrasting moral theories in the work of an exponent of each theory
- ◆ apply contrasting moral theories to a problem or issue
- ◆ evaluate the effectiveness of each theory in dealing with the problem or issue

Each candidate should submit one open book essay/report of 2000-3000 words, which illustrates his/her knowledge and understanding as well as his/her skills of analysis and evaluation. Candidates must apply at least **two** moral theories to an ethical problem or issue, which they have chosen in negotiation with their lecturer. The problem or issue should serve as a vehicle for exploring the theories selected. They should also endeavour to use contemporary literature where appropriate.

Higher National Unit specification: statement of standards (cont)

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

A feedback session with the candidate should ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work.

Assessment guidelines

Outcome 3 will be assessed holistically with Outcomes 1 and 2.

Administrative Information

Unit code:	DP4A 35
Unit title:	Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy
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Higher National Unit specification: support notes

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

This part of the Unit specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

Guidance on the content and context for this Unit

The purpose of this Unit is to give candidates an awareness of how classical and contemporary philosophy can be applied to contemporary ethical problems or issues.

Outcome 1 is intended to provide candidates with a basic taxonomy of moral and ethical theories and introduce to the more prominent normative and meta-ethical theories commonly encountered in this area of philosophy. The specified theories are intended as a minimum guide and tutors may wish to teach and assess from theories out with this list (e.g. the ethical approaches of Nietzsche or Sartre).

Outcome 2 aims to allow candidates to explore the standard objections as well as the strengths of the theories they have studied. It is assumed that this outcome will be delivered in conjunction with Outcome 1.

Outcome 3 invites candidates to apply some of the theories and concepts they have learned in the previous two Outcomes in the investigation of a contemporary ethical problem or issue. Ideally this issue will be selected by the candidates themselves in negotiation with their tutor and will involve them in personal reading and research in order to achieve the Outcome. Suitable ethical problems/issues might include:

- ◆ war
- ◆ suicide
- ◆ moral relativism
- ◆ women's rights
- ◆ animal rights
- ◆ punishment
- ◆ moral facts
- ◆ abortion
- ◆ environmental ethics
- ◆ euthanasia
- ◆ famine

However, this list is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Guidance on the delivery and assessment of this Unit

The Unit is best suited to run as part of the HNC/D Social Sciences course. Whilst this unit does not assume any knowledge from previous philosophy units it may require critical thinking and evaluation skills developed in prior Philosophy units in the HN framework. It is not envisaged that it be integrated in terms of delivery and assessment with other Units in the framework although this is left at the discretion of the centre.

This unit will be holistically assessed by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. Each candidate should supply a single piece of work, which illustrates his/her knowledge and understanding as well as his/her skills of analysis and evaluation. This will take the form of one open book essay/report of 2000 – 3000 words. The assessment topic should be handed out or negotiated at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit and a submission date set. A feedback session with the candidate should ensure the authenticity of the candidate's work. Tutors may note that the assessment of this unit asks candidates to evaluate 'contrasting theories' in order to satisfy each outcome. Candidates must apply at least 2 moral theories to an ethical problem or issue, which they have chosen in negotiation with their lecturer. The problem or issue should serve as a vehicle for exploring the theories selected. They should also endeavour to use contemporary literature where appropriate.

It should perhaps be stressed to candidates that moral philosophy, or indeed any philosophy, is not entirely composed of dichotomous debates as the manner of assessment might suggest. However this assessment strategy is simply intended as a vehicle for providing a structured way in which candidates can demonstrate their knowledge in a range of areas and their skills of analysis and evaluation.

It is envisaged that Outcomes 1 and 2 will be taught concurrently and will require a significant amount of tutor input. Group work, lectures and seminars would all make suitable teaching approaches. Video and on-line resources could also be utilised. Additionally, tutors may wish to include or make reference to moral theories out with those specified in this document to include theories or theorists of special interest.

Outcome 3 would ideally be delivered by directed independent study with candidates negotiating their own topics of interest with their tutor and seeking out exponents of particular theories from their personal reading. As this is an HND level unit it is not unreasonable to expect candidates to have sufficiently well developed research and investigation skills. Candidates should be encouraged to seek out contemporary texts wherever possible. Tutors may wish to use individual tutorials as a means of monitoring progress, reading drafts or suggesting further avenues of investigation in the assessment phase of this unit.

Opportunities for developing Core Skills

This unit provides a range of opportunities for developing 4 of the 5 Core Skills. The extent of development will depend on the learning opportunities chosen by the candidate or the delivery and assessment methods selected by the tutor.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes (cont)

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Communication - This Unit may contribute towards the Component ‘Written Communication’ at Higher because the assessment is an essay. The general skill for this component is ‘Produce well-structured written communication on complex topics’. In addition the reading component may be developed through the analysis and evaluation of contrasting moral theories. The general skill for this component is “Read and understand complex written communication”. Opportunity also exists for the development of the oral component ‘Produce and respond to oral communication on a complex topic’ through class/group debates.

In both formative and summative assessment the candidate should be encouraged to present all essential ideas/information and supporting detail in a logical and effective order; use a structure that takes account of purpose and audience and links major and minor points in ways which assist the clarity and impact of the writing; use conventions which are effective in achieving the purpose and adapted as necessary for the target audience and use spelling, punctuation and sentence structures which are consistently accurate.

These skills can be developed through formative activities such as short essays, without being formally assessed for certification of the Core Skill.

Working with Others - A tutor may actively choose to develop the general skill of “Work with others in a group to analyse, plan and compete an activity” at Intermediate 2 level by setting tasks for group activity and arranging joint information feedback sessions. Candidates could be encouraged to collaborate in the early stages of their search activities.

Information Technology - Opportunities to develop this skill can easily be incorporated into the delivery of the unit by supporting the candidate to carry out information searches using efficient and effective search strategies. This will contribute towards the component Using an IT system effectively and responsibly to process a range of information, specifically the skill “carry out two searches to extract and present relevant information from electronic data sources” at Intermediate 2 level. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

Problem Solving - This core skill will be developed at Higher level throughout this unit particularly in planning tasks. Tutors should encourage learners to explore appropriate strategies for managing their time and evaluating the considerable amount of data available on topics contained in this unit. This will contribute towards the component Critical Thinking where the general skill of analysing a complex situation or issue will be developed; the component Planning and Organising where the general skill of planning, organising and completing a complex task will be developed and the component Reviewing and Evaluating where the general skill of reviewing and evaluating a complex problem solving activity will be developed. This Core Skill could be developed without formal certification.

Open learning

The Unit could be delivered by open or distance learning. However, it would require planning by the centre to ensure sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence.

Higher National Unit specification: support notes

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Candidates with additional support needs

This Unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on the SQA website www.sqa.org.uk

General information for candidates

Unit title: Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy

HN Unit DP4A 35 *Philosophy D: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy* is designed to develop knowledge and understanding of classical and contemporary theories of morality. It introduces you to the philosophical study of ethics and meta-ethics and develops your analytical and evaluative skills in applying these concepts to a contemporary ethical issue.

This unit will be holistically assessed by a single instrument of assessment covering all Unit Outcomes. This will take the form of one open book essay/report of 2000 – 3000 words. The assessment topic will be handed out or negotiated at an appropriate point in the delivery of the unit and a submission date set. A feedback session with your tutor will ensure the authenticity of your work.