



## National Unit Specification: general information

**UNIT** Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

**CODE** F8K4 11

**COURSE** Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

### SUMMARY

This Unit is a mandatory Unit of the Intermediate 2 Philosophy Course, but it can also be taken as a free-standing Unit.

This Unit offers progression for candidates who have studied an appropriate Intermediate 1 Course or Unit(s). It is also suitable as an Intermediate 2 level introduction for those who have no background in the subject. In this Unit, candidates develop some basic skills which will help them begin to examine arguments in a reasoned and structured manner. The terms and concepts studied in this Unit, and the skills involved in applying them, are relevant to all areas of human life. The ability to understand and recognise some of the basic characteristics of reliable and unreliable arguments is a powerful tool in all personal and social contexts.

Specific features of reliable and unreliable arguments are studied in this Unit but the basic understanding and critical examining skills developed are relevant in a wide variety of contexts. These skills prepare candidates for the study of Philosophy at Higher or in Courses at Further Education colleges. Candidates will also be prepared for the study of any other subject which involves understanding and examining arguments. In addition, candidates will have demonstrated the skills necessary for entry into any field of employment where basic reasoning skills are required.

### OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate an understanding of the building blocks of arguments.
- 2 Critically examine ordinary language arguments.

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### Administrative Information

**Superclass:** DE

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## **National Unit Specification: general information (cont)**

**UNIT**          Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

### **RECOMMENDED ENTRY**

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- ◆ Intermediate 1 Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies course or Unit(s)
- ◆ A social subjects course or Unit(s) at Intermediate 1

### **CREDIT VALUE**

0.5 credits at Intermediate 2 (3 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 5\*).

*\*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.*

### **CORE SKILLS**

Achievement of this Unit gives automatic certification of the following:

Complete Core Skill	None
Core Skills component	Critical Thinking at SCQF level 5

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards**

### **UNIT      Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)**

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

#### **OUTCOME 1**

Demonstrate an understanding of the building blocks of arguments.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Describe the difference between statements and arguments.
- (b) Use ordinary language examples to support this description.
- (c) Given previously unseen examples of ordinary language arguments, identify their premises and conclusions.

#### **OUTCOME 2**

Critically examine ordinary language arguments.

##### **Performance Criteria**

- (a) Given previously unseen examples of ordinary language argument, present the premises and conclusions in a structured manner.
- (b) Explain specific examples of unreliable reasoning.
- (c) Explain whether or not the conclusions follow from true premises.
- (d) State reasons to support the explanations given.

## **National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)**

### **UNIT        Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)**

#### **EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT**

Details of the mandatory content for this Unit can be found in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards at the end of this Unit specification.

To demonstrate satisfactory attainment of all the Outcomes and Performance Criteria candidates must produce written and/or recorded oral evidence which samples across the mandatory content of this Unit. The evidence should be produced in response to a closed book, supervised test with a time limit of 30 minutes. It should be gathered on a single occasion.

The mandatory content for this Unit should be assessed by short and restricted response items. The questions should sample across the mandatory content. The questions should allow candidates to generate answers which demonstrate competence in all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. 60 percent of the marks available should be awarded for knowledge and understanding in line with Outcome 1. The remaining forty percent of the marks available should be awarded for critical examination in line with Outcome 2. The use of a cut-off score is appropriate for this assessment.

Unit assessment is holistic in nature. When reassessment is required individual candidates should therefore attempt a new assessment in its entirety to ensure that a different range of mandatory content is sampled.

The standard to be applied, cut-off score and the breadth of coverage are illustrated in the National Assessment Bank items available for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit they should be of a comparable standard.

## National Unit Specification: support notes

### UNIT Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

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 20 hours.

#### GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

In this Unit, candidates develop some basic skills which will help them begin to examine arguments in a structured manner. They develop an understanding of the building blocks of arguments and some of the characteristics of reliable and unreliable arguments. Candidates then use this understanding to critically examine examples of ordinary language arguments.

Candidates must study **ALL** content. The content is studied under two headings which are:

- ◆ the building blocks of arguments
- ◆ reliable and unreliable arguments

A detailed outline of all mandatory content can be found in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards at the end of these Support Notes.

#### GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Throughout their study of this Unit, candidates will develop basic knowledge and skills which are relevant when examining forms of philosophical and everyday human discourse. This fact should be emphasised at the beginning of the learning and teaching process. Teachers and lecturers should therefore avoid introducing relevant terms and concepts in an abstract manner. For example:

- ◆ When investigating the distinction between statements and arguments, candidates might be asked to distinguish between straightforward examples of ordinary language statements and arguments and to discuss the differences they recognise. This will allow them to appreciate some of the ways in which statements and arguments function differently in everyday human discourse.
- ◆ Candidates might also be encouraged to find their own examples of statements and arguments — this will reinforce their understanding of the distinctions involved.
- ◆ When introducing the common fallacy of *appealing to authority*, candidates might be asked to comment on straightforward examples which teachers or lecturers have adapted from television/radio debates, newspaper columns or letters pages. By identifying that there is a problem of reasoning and discussing the nature of that problem, candidates will gain an understanding of the fallacy. They will also be more likely to recognise this fallacy when encountering it in new contexts.

## National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

### UNIT Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

- ◆ Understanding can also be reinforced by encouraging candidates to find examples of the fallacy of *appealing to irrelevant authority*.

Candidates will be expected to critically examine previously unseen, straightforward examples of ordinary language arguments in both Unit and Course assessment. This ability can be developed only if candidates are continually given practice in applying the relevant concepts and skills in new and varied contexts. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that candidates develop techniques to help them examine previously unseen, straightforward ordinary language arguments in a reasoned and structured manner. One possible approach to developing such techniques appears below.

A variety of simple, topical or relevant ordinary language arguments might be composed by the teacher/lecturer. Candidates can then critically examine the arguments by asking the following questions:

- ◆ What is the conclusion of the argument?
- ◆ What are the premises?
- ◆ How can the premises and conclusion be presented in standard form?
- ◆ Does the argument use any of the forms of fallacious reasoning I have studied?
- ◆ Are any of the premises I have identified either obviously true, false or debatable in any way?
- ◆ If the premises are true/undebatable, must the conclusion be accepted as true? (sound argument)

All of the content of this Unit can also be studied in the Higher *Critical Thinking in Philosophy* Unit. If a centre makes the judgement that the Higher Unit would be more appropriate for a particular candidate, the candidate can be assessed at that level. However, it should be noted that there is additional content and differences in the skills being assessed at Higher. Additional learning and teaching will be required to ensure the successful completion of the Higher Unit in these circumstances.

For candidates who study this Unit as part of the Intermediate 2 Course, there are significant opportunities to integrate the skills they acquire into other course Units. The ability to understand and critically examine the reasoning on which specific arguments, theories and/or positions are based is relevant when studying all other Units in the Intermediate 2 Course.

Guidance on induction and a variety of classroom activities, can be found in the *Guidance on Learning and Teaching Approaches for this Course* within the Course Details.

### **GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT**

Details of the appropriate conditions for assessment of competence in this Unit are outlined in the Evidence Requirements for the Unit in the Statement of Standards. Centres must make sure that all Unit assessment is carried out under the stated conditions.

Candidates will develop their knowledge and skills throughout their study of all mandatory content. This would suggest that appropriate instruments of assessment may best be attempted as an end-of-Unit test.

## **National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)**

### **UNIT           Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)**

The mandatory content for this Unit should be assessed by short answer and restricted response questions. The questions should sample across the mandatory content. The questions should allow candidates to generate answers which demonstrate competence in all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. sixty percent of the marks available should be awarded for understanding in line with Outcome 1. The remaining forty percent of the marks available should be awarded for Critical Examination in line with Outcome 2.

Appropriate instruments of assessment, marking schemes and cut-off scores are contained in the National Assessment Bank items for this Unit.

#### **DISABLED CANDIDATES AND/OR THOSE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements)

# National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards

## UNIT Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

*NB: This Appendix is within the Statement of Standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit.*

**There are no options in this Unit.** The mandatory content is detailed below and candidates must study **all** content.

In this Unit candidates must develop an understanding of the building blocks of arguments and some of the characteristics of reliable and unreliable arguments. Candidates must then use this understanding to critically examine examples of ordinary language arguments.

Candidates must study **all** of the following content:

### Content

#### 1 The building blocks of arguments

The purpose of an argument

- ◆ establishing, rather than simply stating a point

Distinction between statements and arguments

- ◆ asserting and proving
- ◆ denying and refuting

Argument structure

- ◆ premises
- ◆ conclusion
- ◆ standard form

#### 2 Reliable and unreliable arguments

Reliable arguments

- ◆ the conclusion follows from the premises (validity)
- ◆ and the premises are true (soundness)

Unreliable arguments

- ◆ attacking the person
- ◆ false dilemma
- ◆ illegitimate appeals to authority
- ◆ argument from ignorance



## National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards (cont)

### UNIT Critical Thinking in Philosophy (Intermediate 2)

#### Glossary

It is accepted that different critical thinking and logic textbooks may use different terminology from one another or use the same terminology in different contexts.

Therefore for the purposes of clarity and consistency, the following definitions are those which will be used in SQA documents, Unit assessments and Course assessments and associated marking schemes:

**Argument from ignorance:** this fallacy is committed if it is argued that since  $p$  has not been proved true, it must be false (or that since  $p$  has not been proved false, it must be true).

**Argument:** a collection of statements (the premises) put forward to support a central claim (the conclusion)

**Assert:** To claim that something is the case without supporting evidence. Statements can only assert a claim, they cannot prove one.

**Attacking the person:** this fallacy is committed if it is argued that  $p$  is false on the grounds that it is advanced by a particular person, for example because that person stands to gain from our acceptance of it as true or because that person's behaviour is not consistent with the truth of  $p$ .

**Deductive argument:** an argument which attempts to prove certain conclusions based on what is contained in the premises alone, eg 'All cats have tails. Felix is a cat therefore Felix has a tail.'

**Deny:** To simply claim that something is not the case without supporting evidence. Statements can only assert a claim, they cannot prove one.

**False dilemma:** this fallacy is committed if, in the course of an argument, it is presumed without argument that  $p$  and  $q$  are the only two possibilities, when in fact there are other possibilities.

**Illegitimate appeals to authority:** this fallacy is committed if a conclusion  $c$  is inferred from the fact that some person or group asserts  $c$ , without justifying the right of that person or group to be regarded as authoritative in this matter.

**Prove:** To support an assertion with evidence. Only arguments can prove a claim.

**Refute:** To deny an assertion with supporting evidence. Only arguments can refute a claim.

**Soundness:** a deductive argument which has true premises and is valid is said to be sound. An unsound argument is therefore one which has either a false premise or is invalid or both.

**Standard form:** a consistent way of organizing and presenting arguments which involves identifying the premises and conclusions; converting any rhetorical questions; making explicit hidden premises; identifying intermediate conclusions and listing them in a logical sequence (eg premise, premise, conclusion).

**Statement:** a sentence capable of being true or false (eg 'the sky is blue'). Statements are also known as propositions.

**Validity:** a valid argument is one which would guarantee a true conclusion if the premises were true. An invalid argument does not guarantee a true conclusion when the premises are true.