



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Philosophy: Metaphysics (Intermediate 2)

CODE F8K5 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 suitable as an Intermediate 2 level introduction to philosophy. The debates and positions studied in this Unit are relevant to many questions of ultimate human significance, for example: Is human life simply an accident of nature? Is there some ultimate meaning and purpose to be found in the universe? Do I have control over my actions? Are my actions simply a product of my genes and environment?

Candidates develop an understanding of some aspects of a specific metaphysical debate and positions adopted in relation to that debate. They gain an understanding of **either** aspects of the debate concerning the existence of God **or** aspects of the free will/determinism debate. Candidates then critically examine specific positions which are relevant to the chosen debate.

A specific metaphysical debate and positions are studied in this Unit but the understanding and critical thinking skills developed are relevant in a wide variety of contexts. The skills and content 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 requires the ability to understand and critically examine complex problems or positions. In addition, candidates will have demonstrated the skills necessary for entry into any field of employment where basic abstract reasoning skills are required.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate an understanding of a metaphysical debate.
- 2 Critically examine positions adopted in relation to a metaphysical debate.

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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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: general information (cont)

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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 a metaphysical debate.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Describe the philosophical problem which gives rise to a specific metaphysical debate.
- (b) Describe specific positions which are adopted in relation to this debate.

OUTCOME 2

Critically examine positions adopted in relation to a metaphysical debate.

Performance Criteria

- (a) Explain the reasoning on which specific positions adopted in relation to a metaphysical debate are based.
- (b) Describe objections and replies in relation to these positions.
- (c) State an opinion about which position is most appropriate in light of the available evidence.
- (d) Give reasons to support the opinion stated.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

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EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

Details of the mandatory content for this Unit can be found in the Appendix 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 the chosen option. 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 restricted and extended 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 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

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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

Candidates study aspects of **one** metaphysical debate from a choice of two. The relevant metaphysical debates are:

- ◆ Debate 1: Is there a rational basis for belief in God?
- ◆ Debate 2: Do we have free will?

Candidates investigate specific positions which are adopted in relation to the chosen debate. They also study objections and replies to these positions.

A detailed outline of the mandatory content for both debates can be found in the Appendix at the end of these Support Notes. Candidates must study **all** content **in relation to their chosen debate**.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates gain an understanding of specific positions which are adopted in relation to a particular metaphysical debate. The positions are prescribed. Care must be taken to ensure that candidates do not simply learn to describe these positions but also learn to critically examine them in a meaningful way. **For this reason it is essential that candidates are taught how to recognise and explain the reasoning on which each position is based. It is also essential that candidates can describe objections and replies to these positions.** This will allow them to appreciate some aspects of philosophical debate and enhance their ability to critically examine such debates.

Specific objections and replies to each position are not prescribed. These are a matter for the professional judgement of teachers and lecturers in light of the resources available and their knowledge of the prior experience of candidates. However, care must be taken to avoid distorting candidates' understanding of these perennial philosophical debates by selecting obscure or trivial objections or by misrepresenting the position discussed.

For candidates who study this Unit as part of the Intermediate 2 Course, there are significant opportunities to integrate knowledge and/or skills across the Course. The ability to critically assess positions and debates is relevant to all Units in the Course. Candidates will have many opportunities to adapt and refine these skills when using them in a variety of contexts.

All of the content of this Unit can also be studied in the Higher *Metaphysics* 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.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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If candidates go on to study the Higher *Metaphysics* Unit there will be significant opportunities to build on and develop the knowledge and skills they have already acquired. However, it may be advisable to choose a different debate at Higher level. This will help to maintain student motivation and interest. It will also allow candidates to develop their knowledge and skills in a different context.

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 during their study of all mandatory content. This would suggest that appropriate instruments of assessment may best be attempted as an end of Unit test.

The mandatory content for this Unit should be assessed by restricted and extended response questions. The questions should sample across the mandatory content. The questions should allow candidates to generate answers which demonstrate competence in both Outcomes and all 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

National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards

UNIT Philosophy: Metaphysics (Intermediate 2)

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

In this Unit candidates must develop an understanding of aspects of a specific metaphysical debate and positions adopted in relation to that debate. They must choose to study **either** the debate concerning the existence of God **or** the free will/determinism debate. Candidates must then critically examine specific positions which are relevant to the chosen debate.

As already stated, **there is a choice of option to be studied**. All candidates **must** investigate **one** of the following metaphysical debates:

EITHER

Debate 1: Is there a rational basis for belief in God?

OR

Debate 2: Do we have free will?

Candidates must study specific positions in relation to the chosen debate. They must not simply learn to describe these positions but must also be able to critically examine them. In addition, they must state an opinion about which position is most appropriate in light of available evidence. **For this reason, it is essential that candidates also investigate some of the objections and replies to these objections in relation to each position and form a reasoned opinion on each position.** Further guidance on this issue can be found in the Support Notes in this Unit specification.

The mandatory content to be covered when studying **either** Debate 1 **or** Debate 2 is outlined below:

Content

ALL candidates must study **EITHER** Debate 1 **OR** Debate 2.

Debate 1: Is there a rational basis for belief in God?

- (a) The universe requires an ultimate explanation
 - ◆ The Cosmological Argument(eg Aquinas' Cosmological Argument)
 - ◆ Arguments in favour of the cosmological Argument
 - ◆ Arguments against the cosmological Argument
- (b) Apparent order and purpose in the universe requires an explanation
 - ◆ The Teleological Argument (eg Paley's Watch argument)
 - ◆ Arguments in favour of the Teleological Argument
 - ◆ Arguments against the Teleological Argument

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

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Debate 2: Do we have free will?

(a) Libertarianism

- ◆ Moral accountability presupposes that we have free will
- ◆ Arguments in favour of Libertarianism
- ◆ Arguments against Libertarianism

(b) Determinism/hard determinism

- ◆ The causal principle implies that our choices are predetermined
- ◆ Arguments in favour of Hard Determinism
- ◆ Arguments against Hard Determinism

(c) Compatibilism/soft determinism

- ◆ Free will as freedom from constraint
- ◆ Arguments in favour of Compatibilism
- ◆ Arguments against Compatibilism

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

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Glossary

It is accepted that different 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 and Course assessments and associated marking schemes:

For the Existence of God Topic

A posteriori: Knowable or justified from experience.

A priori: Knowable or justified independently of experience.

Contingent: A reference to something that could have been otherwise.

Cosmological argument: A type of argument that makes an inference from observations of the world (or cosmos) to a unique being (God).

Infinite regress: A series of causes or explanations in which each item in the series requires the preceding item to explain it but where there is no possibility of a first item that can begin the series.

Teleological: The idea, from the Greek word telos, that everything strives towards a purpose or goal.

For the Free will/Determinism Topic

Agent causation: A supposed form of causation argued for by Libertarians whereby agents can initiate a new causal chain without the agents themselves being causally determined.

Compatibilism: The position that even in a fully deterministic world it is possible for free will to exist.

Determinism: The position that all events, including those that make up human behaviour and thinking, are caused to occur by prior sufficient causes.

Event causation: The form of causation whereby an event occurs because it has been caused by a prior event.

Hard determinism: The position that determinism and free will are incompatible, that determinism is true, and that, therefore, there is no free will.

Incompatibilism: The position that determinism and free will are incompatible, ie that if one is true then the other is false.

Libertarianism: The position that determinism and free will are incompatible, that determinism is false, and that we do possess free will.

Soft determinism: Usually used as synonymous with ‘compatibilism’.