



National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

CODE F8K6 12

COURSE Philosophy (Higher)

SUMMARY

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

This Unit offers progression for candidates who have studied the Intermediate 2 Philosophy Course or Units. It is also suitable as a higher level introduction for those who have no background in the subject. Candidates develop the knowledge and skills necessary to understand theories in the area of moral philosophy. The theories and positions studied in this Unit are of both philosophical and general human interest. They are relevant to such questions as ‘How can we decide the way we should act?’ and ‘Why is it difficult to agree a common approach to moral issues?’

Specific normative theories are studied in this Unit but the critical thinking skills developed are relevant in a wide variety of contexts. These skills prepare candidates for the study of Philosophy in courses at Further Education colleges or Higher Education Institutions. Candidates will also be prepared for the study of any other subject which requires the critical analysis and evaluation of complex or abstract issues. In addition, candidates will have demonstrated the skills necessary for entry into any field of employment where the ability to analyse issues and arguments, and evaluate complex or abstract ideas, is required. They will also have demonstrated an awareness of the complexity involved in ethical judgements.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate an understanding of normative moral theories.
- 2 Critically analyse normative moral theories.
- 3 Critically evaluate normative moral theories.

Administrative Information

Superclass: DE

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

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 2 Philosophy Course or Unit(s)
- ◆ Intermediate 2 Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies Course or Unit(s)
- ◆ A social subjects Course or Unit(s) at Intermediate 2

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*).

**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 6

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

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 normative moral theories

Performance Criteria

- (a) describe specific normative moral theories
- (b) refer to moral issues as part of these descriptions

OUTCOME 2

Critically analyse normative moral theories

Performance Criteria

- (a) explain the reasoning and assumptions on which specific normative theories are based
- (b) explain the implication of these theories when making moral judgements
- (c) refer to moral issues as part of this analysis

OUTCOME 3

Critically evaluate normative moral theories

Performance Criteria

- (a) explain the strengths and weaknesses of specific normative moral theories
- (b) refer to moral issues as part of this explanation
- (c) present a conclusion on the relative merits of specific normative moral theories
- (d) state reasons in support of this conclusion which are based on aspects already discussed

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

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 the Unit. The evidence should be produced in response to a closed-book, supervised test with a time limit of one hour. 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 and allow candidates to generate answers which demonstrate competence in all Outcomes and Performance Criteria. Approximately fifty percent of the marks available should be awarded for knowledge and understanding with the remaining fifty percent of the marks available awarded for critical analysis and evaluation. 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 Moral Philosophy (Higher)

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

Candidates must study **ALL** content. A brief overview appears below:

Candidates investigate two specific normative moral theories which illustrate both a **consequentialist** and a **deontological** approach to moral judgements. The specific theories are:

- ◆ the consequentialist theory of Utilitarianism as illustrated by the ideas of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill
- ◆ the deontological theory of Immanuel Kant

Questions in Unit and Course assessment will sample across the mandatory content of this Unit. It is therefore of vital importance that candidates are familiar with **all** mandatory content. A detailed outline of the mandatory content can be found in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards at the end of this Unit Specification.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Throughout their study of this Unit, candidates will encounter philosophical terms which are relevant to the study of normative moral theories. Candidates should be encouraged to become familiar with and use relevant philosophical terms when discussing the issues involved and completing written tasks. A Glossary containing relevant terminology can be found in the Appendix to the Statement of Standards.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Candidates will gain an understanding of two specific normative moral theories which illustrate both a consequentialist and a deontological approach to moral judgements. The concepts involved are abstract in nature therefore care must be taken to illustrate them in a way that is accessible to Higher candidates. Further, it is a requirement of both Unit and Course assessment that candidates refer to moral issues when describing, analysing and evaluating these theories. Teachers and lecturers should therefore illustrate the theories, related concepts and criticisms with reference to moral issues and scenarios. **However, it is important to avoid an in-depth study of specific moral issues; illustrations should focus only on aspects of the moral issues or scenarios that will help candidates to understand the specific theories, concepts and criticisms they study.**

The moral issues and scenarios chosen for illustration are a matter for the professional judgement of the teacher or lecturer in light of the resources available and his/her knowledge of the prior experience of candidates. They should be directly relevant to the aspects of the theories being examined and be chosen to stimulate discussion and promote understanding.

For example:

- ◆ the problem of justice, in relation to Utilitarianism, might be illustrated with reference to crime and punishment. Candidates could examine the implications of the Greatest Happiness Principle in relation to whether it is better to ‘punish’ an innocent person in order to deter others, rather than allow a crime to appear to go unpunished. They could also discuss the different conclusions which might be reached by applying an Act or Rule Utilitarian approach
- ◆ the problem of ignoring consequences, in relation to Kant, could be illustrated with reference to a scenario in which a vulnerable, innocent person is being sought by a cruel authority. In order to save the innocent person it is necessary to lie, but lying would go against Kant’s principle of Universalisability. Candidates could also discuss the problem of competing duties in relation to such a case

It is of vital importance that candidates do not simply learn to describe the normative theories and the criticisms they study, but also learn to critically analyse, evaluate and apply them.

Discussion of Utilitarianism should involve consideration of the arguments for hedonism, counter arguments and an awareness of possible amendments to the theory. Analysis of Kantian ethics should involve the candidates distinguishing between the Kantian notion of duty and the more commonly understood notion of duty; and distinguishing between treating someone as a means and treating someone as a means only. Candidates should be able to consider whether supporters of the theories might have a suitable response to any criticisms that have been made of the theory.

Some of the content in this Unit can also be studied in the Intermediate 2 *Moral Philosophy* Unit. If a centre makes the judgement that the Intermediate 2 Unit would be more appropriate for a particular candidate, the candidate can be assessed at that level without difficulty. However, it should be noted that there are differences in the skills assessed at that level. If candidates have already studied the Intermediate 2 *Moral Philosophy* Unit there will be significant opportunities to build on and develop the knowledge and skills they have already acquired.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

For candidates who study this Unit as part of the Higher Course, there are significant opportunities to integrate knowledge and/or skills in the remaining three Units. The skills of critical analysis and evaluation apply 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.

Guidance on setting the climate for effective learning and teaching, and a variety of classroom activities, can be found in the ‘Guidance on Learning and Teaching Approaches for this Course’ in 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 and 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.

The mandatory content for this Unit should be assessed by extended 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. Approximately fifty percent of the marks available should be awarded for knowledge and understanding and the remaining fifty percent of the marks available should be awarded for critical analysis and evaluation.

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: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

SOURCES

The following sources are provided to exemplify the philosophical positions and arguments that candidates are required to study.

Utilitarianism, Extract One

Jeremy Bentham, from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do...

By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual...

The community is a fictitious body, composed of the individual persons who are considered as constituting as it were its members. The interest of the community then is what? — the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it...

Utilitarianism, Extract Two

Jeremy Bentham, from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.

- I Pleasures then, and the avoidance of pains, are the ends that the legislator has in view; it behoves him therefore to understand their value. Pleasures and pains are the instruments he has to work with: it behoves him therefore to understand their force, which is again, in other words, their value.
- II To a person considered by himself, the value of a pleasure or pain considered by itself, will be greater or less, according to the four following circumstances:
 - 1 Its intensity.
 - 2 Its duration.
 - 3 Its certainty or uncertainty.
 - 4 Its propinquity or remoteness.
- III These are the circumstances which are to be considered in estimating a pleasure or a pain considered each of them by itself. But when the value of any pleasure or pain is considered for the purpose of estimating the tendency of any act by which it is produced, there are two other circumstances to be taken into the account; these are:
 - 5 Its fecundity, or the chance it has of being followed by sensations of the same kind: that is, pleasures, if it be a pleasure: pains, if it be a pain.
 - 6 Its purity, or the chance it has of not being followed by sensations of the opposite kind: that is, pains, if it be a pleasure: pleasures, if it be a pain.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

These two last, however, are in strictness scarcely to be deemed properties of the pleasure or the pain itself; they are not, therefore, in strictness to be taken into the account of the value of that pleasure or that pain. They are in strictness to be deemed properties only of the act, or other event, by which such pleasure or pain has been produced; and accordingly are only to be taken into the account of the tendency of such act or such event.

IV To a number of persons, with reference to each of whom to the value of a pleasure or a pain is considered, it will be greater or less, according to seven circumstances: to wit, the six preceding ones; viz.

- 1 Its intensity.
- 2 Its duration.
- 3 Its certainty or uncertainty.
- 4 Its propinquity or remoteness.
- 5 Its fecundity.
- 6 Its purity.

And one other; to wit:

- 7 Its extent; that is, the number of persons to whom it extends; or (in other words) who are affected by it.

V To take an exact account then of the general tendency of any act, by which the interests of a community are affected, proceed as follows. Begin with any one person of those whose interests seem most immediately to be affected by it: and take an account,

- 1 Of the value of each distinguishable pleasure which appears to be produced by it in the first instance.
- 2 Of the value of each pain which appears to be produced by it in the first instance.
- 3 Of the value of each pleasure which appears to be produced by it after the first. This constitutes the fecundity of the first pleasure and the impurity of the first pain.
- 4 Of the value of each pain which appears to be produced by it after the first. This constitutes the fecundity of the first pain, and the impurity of the first pleasure.
- 5 Sum up all the values of all the pleasures on the one side, and those of all the pains on the other. The balance, if it be on the side of pleasure, will give the good tendency of the act upon the whole, with respect to the interests of that individual person; if on the side of pain, the bad tendency of it upon the whole.
- 6 Take an account of the number of persons whose interests appear to be concerned; and repeat the above process with respect to each. Sum up the numbers expressive of the degrees of good tendency, which the act has, with respect to each individual, in regard to whom the tendency of it is good upon the whole: do this again with respect to each individual, in regard to whom the tendency of it is good upon the whole: do this again with respect to each individual, in regard to whom the tendency of it is bad upon the whole. Take the balance which if on the side of pleasure, will give the general good tendency of the act, with respect to the total

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

number or community of individuals concerned; if on the side of pain, the general evil tendency, with respect to the same community.

- VI It is not to be expected that this process should be strictly pursued previously to every moral judgment, or to every legislative or judicial operation. It may, however, be always kept in view: and as near as the process actually pursued on these occasions approaches to it, so near will such process approach to the character of an exact one.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Utilitarianism, Extract Three

John Stuart Mill, from *Utilitarianism*.

Now, such a theory of life excites in many minds, and among them in some of the most estimable in feeling and purpose, inveterate dislike. To suppose that life has (as they express it) no higher end than pleasure—no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit—they designate as utterly mean and grovelling; as a doctrine worthy only of swine... the accusation supposes human beings to be capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable... if the sources of pleasure were precisely the same to human beings and to swine, the rule of life which is good enough for the one would be good enough for the other... (however)... Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them, do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification... It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.

If I am asked, what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, even though knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment a superiority in quality, so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account.

Now it is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs. They would not resign what they possess more than he for the most complete satisfaction of all the desires which they have in common with him. If they ever fancy they would, it is only in cases of unhappiness so extreme, that to escape from it they would exchange their lot for almost any other, however undesirable in their own eyes. A being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and certainly accessible to it at more points, than one of an inferior type; but in spite of these liabilities, he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence... It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

It may be objected, that many who are capable of the higher pleasures, occasionally, under the influence of temptation, postpone them to the lower. But this is quite compatible with a full appreciation of the intrinsic superiority of the higher. Men often, from infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be the less valuable; and this no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures, than when it is between bodily and mental. They pursue sensual indulgences to the injury of health, though perfectly aware that health is the greater good...

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

From this verdict of the only competent judges, I apprehend there can be no appeal. On a question which is the best worth having of two pleasures, or which of two modes of existence is the most grateful to the feelings, apart from its moral attributes and from its consequences, the judgment of those who are qualified by knowledge of both, or, if they differ, that of the majority among them, must be admitted as final.

Utilitarianism, Extract Four

John Stuart Mill, from *Utilitarianism*.

The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it.

Utilitarianism, Extract Five

John Stuart Mill, from *Utilitarianism*.

No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good: that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons.

Utilitarianism, Extract Six

Robert Nozick, from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Blackwell, 1974)

Suppose there were an experience machine that would give you any experience you desired. Superduper neuropsychologists could stimulate your brain so that you would think and feel you were writing a great novel, or making a friend, or reading an interesting book. All the time you would be floating in a tank, with electrodes attached to your brain. Should you plug into this machine for life, preprogramming your life's experiences?...

What does matter to us in addition to our experiences? First, we want to do certain things, and not just have the experience of doing them. In the case of certain experiences, it is only because first we want to do the actions that we want the experiences of doing them or thinking we've done them...

A second reason for not plugging in is that we want to be a certain way, to be a certain sort of person. Someone floating in a tank is an indeterminate blob. There is no answer to the question of what a person is like who has long been in the tank. Is he courageous, kind, intelligent, witty, loving? It's not merely that it's difficult to tell; there's no way he is. Plugging into the machine is a kind of suicide...

Thirdly, plugging into an experience machine limits us to a man-made reality, to a world no deeper or more important than that which people can construct. There is no actual contact with any deeper reality, though the experience of it can be stimulated...

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Kantian Ethics, Extract One

Immanuel Kant, from *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*
In the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com

[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Four ellipses.... indicate the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth.

Nothing in the world — *or out of it!* — can possibly be conceived that could be called ‘good’ without qualification except a GOOD WILL. Mental talents such as intelligence, wit, and judgment, and temperaments such as courage, resoluteness, and perseverance are doubtless in many ways good and desirable; but they can become extremely bad and harmful if the person’s *character* isn’t good — ie if the *will* that is to make use of these gifts of nature isn’t good. Similarly with gifts of fortune. Power, riches, honour, even health, and the over-all well-being and contentment with one’s condition that we call ‘happiness’, create pride, often leading to arrogance, if there isn’t a good will to correct their influence on the mind Not to mention the fact that the sight of someone who shows no sign of a pure and good will and yet enjoys uninterrupted prosperity will never give pleasure to an impartial rational observer. So it seems that without a good will one can’t even be worthy of being happy.

Even qualities that are conducive to this good will and can make its work easier have no intrinsic unconditional worth. We rightly hold them in high esteem, but only because we assume them to be accompanied by a good will; so we can’t take them to be absolutely ·or unconditionally· good. Moderation in emotions and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation not only are good in many ways but seem even to constitute part of the person’s *inner* worth, and they were indeed unconditionally valued by the ancients. Yet they are very far from being good without qualification — ‘good in themselves, good in any circumstances’ — for without the principles of a good will they can become extremely bad: ‘for example’, a villain’s coolness makes him far more dangerous and more straightforwardly abominable to us than he would otherwise have seemed.

What makes a good will *good*? It isn’t what it brings about, its usefulness in achieving some intended end. Rather, good will is good because of *how it wills* — that is, it is *good in itself*. Taken just in itself it is to be valued incomparably more highly than anything that could be brought about by it in the satisfaction of some preference — or, if you like, the sum total of all preferences! Consider this case:

Through bad luck or a miserly endowment from stepmotherly nature, this person’s will has no power at all to accomplish its purpose; not even the greatest effort on his part would enable it to achieve anything it aims at. But he does still have a good will — not as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in his power.

The good will of this person would sparkle like a jewel all by itself, as something that had its full worth in itself. Its value wouldn’t go up or down depending on how useful or fruitless it was. If it was useful, that would only be the *setting* ‘of the jewel’, so to speak, enabling us to handle it more conveniently in commerce (‘a diamond ring is easier to manage than a diamond’) or to get those who don’t know much ‘about jewels’ to look at it. But the setting doesn’t affect the value ‘of the jewel’ and doesn’t recommend it the experts.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Kantian Ethics, Extract Two

Immanuel Kant, from *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*

In the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com

My topic is the difference between doing something from duty and doing it for other reasons. In tackling this, I shall set aside without discussion two kinds of case — one for which my question doesn't arise, a second for which the question arises but is too easy to answer for the case to be interesting or instructive. Following those two, I shall introduce two further kinds of case:

- 1 I shan't discuss actions which — even if they are useful in some way or other — are clearly opposed to duty, because with them the question of doing them from duty doesn't even arise.
- 2 I shall also ignore cases where someone does A, which really is in accord with duty, but where what he directly wants isn't to perform A but to perform B which somehow leads to or involves A. For example: he (B) unbolts the door so as to escape from the fire, and in so doing he (A) enables others to escape also. There is no need to spend time on such cases, because in them it is easy to tell whether an action that is in accord with duty is done from duty or rather for some selfish purpose.
- 3 It is far harder to detect that difference when the action the person performs - one that is in accord with duty — is what he directly wanted to do, rather than being something he did only because it was involved in something else that he directly wanted to do. Take the example of a shop-keeper who charges the same prices for selling his goods to inexperienced customers as for selling them to anyone else. This is in accord with duty. But there is also a prudential and not-duty-based motive that the shop-keeper might have for this course of conduct: when there is a buyers' market, he may sell as cheaply to children as to others so as not to lose customers. Thus the customer is honestly served, but we can't infer from this that the shop-keeper has behaved in this way from duty and principles of honesty. His own advantage requires this behaviour, and we can't assume that in addition he directly wants something for his customers and out of love for them he charges them all the same price. His conduct of his policy on pricing comes neither from duty nor from directly wanting it, but from a selfish purpose.

[Kant's German really does say first that the shop-keeper isn't led by a direct want and then that he is. His point seems to be this:— The shop-keeper does want to treat all his customers equitably; his intention is aimed at precisely that fact about his conduct (unlike the case in (2) where the agent enables other people to escape but isn't aiming at that at all). But the shop-keeper's intention doesn't stop there, so to speak; he wants to treat his customers equitably not because of what he wants for them, but because of how he wants them to behave later in his interests. This involves a kind of indirectness, which doesn't assimilate this case to (2) but does distinguish it from a fourth kind of conduct that still isn't morally worthy but not because it involves the 'indirectness' of (2) or that of (3).]

- 4 It is a duty to preserve one's life, and moreover everyone directly wants to do so. But because of the power of that want, the often anxious care that most men have for their survival has no intrinsic worth, and the maxim Preserve yourself has no moral content. Men preserve their lives according to duty, but not from duty. But now consider this case:

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Adversities and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away this unfortunate man's relish for life. But his fate has not made him passively despondent or dejected. He is strong in soul, and is exasperated at how things have gone for him, and would like actively to do something about it. Specifically, he *wishes for death*. But he preserves his life without loving it, not led by any want or fear, but acting from duty.

For this person the maxim *Preserve yourself* has moral content.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

We have a duty to be charitably helpful where we can, and many people are so sympathetically constituted that without any motive of vanity or selfishness they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy and take delight in the contentment of others if they have made it possible. But I maintain that such behaviour, done in that spirit, has no true moral worth, however amiable it may be and however much it accords with duty. It should be classed with actions done from other wants, such as the desire for honour. With luck, someone's desire for honour may lead to conduct that in fact accords with duty and does good to many people; in that case it deserves praise and encouragement; but it doesn't deserve high esteem, because the maxim on which the person is acting doesn't have the moral content of an action done not because the person *likes* acting in that way but from duty.

[In this context, 'want' and 'liking' and 'desire' are used to translate *Neigung*, elsewhere in this version translated as 'preference'; other translations mostly use 'inclination'.]

Now consider a special case:

This person has been a friend to mankind, but his mind has become clouded by a sorrow of his own that has extinguished all feeling for how others are faring. He still has the power to benefit others in distress, but their need leaves him untouched because he is too preoccupied with his own. But now he tears himself out of his dead insensibility and acts charitably purely from duty, without feeling any want or liking so to behave.

Now, for the first time, his conduct has genuine moral worth. Having been deprived by nature of a warm-hearted temperament, this man could find in himself a source from which to give himself a far higher worth than he could have got through such a temperament. It is just here that the worth of character is brought out, which is morally the incomparably highest of all: he is beneficent not from preference but from duty.

Kantian Ethics, Extract Three

Immanuel Kant, from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

In the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com

So the universal imperative of duty can be expressed as follows: **Act as though the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature.**

...

I want now to list some duties, adopting the usual division of them into duties to ourselves and duties to others, and into perfect duties and imperfect duties.

- 1 A man who has been brought by a series of troubles to the point of despair and of weariness with life still has his reason sufficiently to ask himself: 'Wouldn't it be contrary to my duty to myself to take my own life?' Now he asks: 'Could the maxim of my action in killing myself become a universal law of nature?' Well, here is his maxim:

For love of myself, I make it my principle to cut my life short when prolonging it threatens to bring more troubles than satisfactions.

So the question is whether *this* principle of self-love could become a universal law of nature. If it did, that would be a nature that had a law according to which a single feeling created a life affirming push and also led to the destruction of life itself; and we can see at a glance that such a 'nature' would contradict itself, and so couldn't be a nature. So the maxim we are discussing *couldn't* be a law of nature, and therefore would be utterly in conflict with the supreme principle of duty.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

- 2 Another man sees himself being driven by need to borrow money. He realizes that no-one will lend to him unless he firmly promises to repay it at a certain time, and he is well aware that he wouldn't be able to keep such a promise. He is disposed to make such a promise, but he has enough conscience to ask himself: 'Isn't it improper and opposed to duty to relieve one's needs in that way?' If he does decide to make the promise, the maxim of his action will run like this:

When I think I need money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know that the repayment won't ever happen.

Here he is —for the rest of this paragraph -reflecting on this— 'It may be that this principle of self-love or of personal advantage would fit nicely into my whole future welfare, so that there is no *prudential* case against it'. But the question remains: would it be right? To answer this, I change the demand of self-love into a universal law, and then put the question like this: If my maxim became a universal law, *then* how would things stand? I can see straight off that it could never hold as a universal law of nature, and must contradict itself. For if you take a law saying that anyone who thinks he is in need can make any promises he likes without intending to keep them, and make it *universal* so that everyone in need *does* behave in this way, that would make the promise and the intended purpose of it *impossible* -no-one would believe what was promised to him but would only laugh at any such performance as a vain pretence.'

- 3 A third finds in himself a talent that could be developed so as to make him in many respects a useful person. But he finds himself in comfortable circumstances, and would rather indulge in pleasure than take the trouble to broaden and improve his fortunate natural gifts. But now he asks whether his maxim of neglecting his gifts, agreeing as it does with his liking for idle amusement, also agrees with what is called 'duty'. He sees that a system of nature conforming with this law could indeed exist, with everyone behaving like the Islanders of the south Pacific, letting their talents rust and devoting their lives merely to idleness, indulgence, and baby-making — in short, to pleasure. But he can't possibly will that this should become a universal law of nature or that it should be implanted in us by a natural instinct. For, as a rational being, he necessarily wills that all his abilities should be developed, because they serve him and are given to him for all sorts of possible purposes.
- 4 A fourth man, for whom things are going well, sees that others (whom he could help) have to struggle with great hardships, and he thinks to himself:

What concern of mine is it? Let each one be as happy as heaven wills, or as he can make himself; I won't take anything from him or even envy him; but I have no desire to contribute to his welfare or help him in time of need.

If such a way of thinking were a universal law of nature, the human race could certainly survive — and no doubt that *state* of humanity would be better than one where everyone chatters about sympathy and benevolence and exerts himself occasionally to practice them, while also taking every chance he can to cheat, and to betray or otherwise violate people's rights. But although it is possible that that maxim should *be* a universal law of nature, it is impossible to **will** that it do so. For a will that brought *that* about would conflict with itself, since instances can often arise in which the person in question would need the love and sympathy of others, and he would have no hope of getting the help he desires, being robbed of it by this law of nature springing from his own will.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Those are a few of the many duties that we have (or at least think we have) that can clearly be derived from the single principle that I have stated low on page 23 above. We must *be able to will* that a maxim of our action become a universal law; this is the general formula for the moral evaluation of our action. Some actions are so constituted that their maxim can't even be *thought* as a universal law of nature without contradiction, let alone being *willed* to be such. It's easy to see that an action of that kind conflicts with stricter or narrower (absolutely obligatory) duty. With other actions, the maxim-made-universal-law is not in that way internally impossible (·self-contradictory ·), but it is still something that no-one could possibly *will* to be a universal law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself. It's easy to see that an action of that kind conflicts with broader (meritorious) duty.

Kantian Ethics, Extract Four

Immanuel Kant, from *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*

In the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com

But suppose there were something *whose existence in itself* had absolute value, something which *as an end in itself* could support determinate laws. *That* would be a basis - indeed the *only* basis - for a possible categorical imperative, ie of a practical law.

There is such a thing! It is a human being! I maintain that man — and in general every rational being — exists as an end in himself and *not merely as a means* to be used by this or that will at its discretion. Whenever he acts in ways directed towards himself or towards other rational beings, ·a person serves as a *means* to whatever end his action aims at; but· he must always be regarded as *also an end*. Things that are preferred have only *conditional* value, for if the preferences (and the needs arising from them) didn't exist, their object would be worthless. ·That wouldn't count against the 'objects' in question if the desires on which they depend did themselves have unconditional value, but they don't! If the preferences themselves, as the sources of needs, did have absolute value, one would want to have them; but that is so far from the case that every rational being must wish he were altogether free of them. So the value of any objects *to be obtained* through our actions is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature, if they are not rational beings, have only relative value as means, and are therefore called 'things' [*Sachen*]; whereas rational beings are called '*persons*', because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves (ie as not to be used merely as means) — which makes such a being an object of respect, and something that sets limits to what anyone can choose to do. Such beings are not merely subjective ends whose existence as a result of our action has value *for us*, but are objective ends, ie things [*Dinge*] whose existence is an end in itself. It is indeed an *irreplaceable* end: you can't substitute for it something else to which it would be merely a means. If there were no such ends in themselves, nothing of absolute value could be found, and if all value were conditional and thus contingent, no supreme practical principle for reason could be found anywhere.

So if there is to be a supreme practical principle, and a categorical imperative for the human will, it must be one which, being drawn from the conception of something that must be an end for everyone because it is an end in itself, constitutes an objective principle of the will that can serve as a universal law. The basis for this principle is: *rational nature exists as an end in itself*. Human beings necessarily think of their own existence in this way, which means that the principle holds as a subjective principle of human actions. But every other rational being also thinks of his existence on the same rational ground that holds also for myself;¹¹ and so it is at the same time an *objective* principle — ·one that doesn't depend on contingent facts about this or that *subject* — a supreme practical ground from which it must be possible to derive all laws of the will. So here is the practical imperative.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Act in such a way as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of anyone else, always as an end and never merely as a means. Let us now see whether this can be carried out.

To return to our previous examples:

First, someone thinking of committing suicide will, if he is guided by the concept of necessary duty to oneself, ask himself

Could my suicide be reconciled with the idea of humanity as *an end in itself*? And his answer to this should be No. If he escapes from his burdensome situation by destroying himself, he is using a person merely as *a means* to keeping himself in a tolerable condition up to the end of his life. But a man is not a *thing* [*Sache*], so he isn't something to be used *merely* as a means, and must always be regarded in all his actions as an end in himself. So I can't dispose of a man by maiming, damaging or killing him — and that includes the case where the man is myself. (This basic principle needs to be refined so as to deal properly with questions such as 'May I have one of my limbs amputated to save my life?' and 'May I expose my life to danger in order to save it?' I shan't go into these matters here; they belong to *morals* and not to the metaphysic of morals.)

[Three times in this next paragraph, and nowhere else in this work, Kant writes of someone's 'containing' the end of an action by someone else. Presumably for B to 'contain' the end of A's action is for B to have A's end as *his* end also, to seek what A seeks.] Second, as concerns necessary... duties to others, when someone A has it in mind to make someone else B a deceitful promise, he sees immediately that he intends to use B merely as a means, without B's containing in himself the *end* of the action. For B can't possibly assent to A's acting against him in this way, so he can't contain in himself the end of this action. This conflict with the principle about treating others as ends is even easier to see in examples of attacks on people's freedom and property; for in those cases it is obvious that someone who violates the rights of men intends to make use of the person of others merely as means, without considering that as rational beings they should always be valued at the same time as ends, ie as beings who can contain in themselves the end of the very same action.¹²

Thirdly, with regard to contingent (meritorious) duty to oneself [for 'meritorious' see middle paragraph on page 25], it isn't sufficient that the action *not conflict* with humanity in our person as an end in itself; it must also *harmonize* with it. In human nature there are predispositions to greater perfection that are part of nature's purpose for humanity....; to neglect these might perhaps be *consistent* with the preservation of humanity as an end in itself but not with the *furtherance* of that end. [In the original, the italics contrast 'furtherance' not with 'consistent' but with 'preservation'. The present version is based on a conjecture that was a slip.]

Fourthly, with regard to meritorious duty to others: — Humanity might survive even if no-one contributed to the happiness of others, but also no-one intentionally took anything away from the happiness of others; and this is a likely enough state of affairs, because the end or purpose that all men *naturally* have is *their own* happiness. This would put human conduct into harmony with humanity as an end in itself, but only in a *negative* manner. For a *positive* harmony with humanity as an end in itself, what is required is that everyone *positively* tries to further the ends of others as far as he can. For the ends of any person, who is an end in himself, must as far as possible be also *my* ends, if that thought *of him as an end in himself* is to have its *full* effect on me.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

This principle concerning the status of each human being — and more generally of each rational creature — as an end in himself is the supreme limiting condition on the freedom of action of each man. (*Supreme* in the sense that it trumps everything else, eg prudential considerations.) It isn't drawn from experience; there are two reasons why it *can't* be. One reason is the principle's universality: it applies to *absolutely all rational beings*, and experience doesn't stretch out that far. The other is the fact that the principle isn't about humanity considered subjectively, as something that men *do* take to be an end, ie do choose to aim at, but rather about humanity considered as the objective end that *ought to* constitute the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends, whatever they may be. Experience can inform us about what subjective ends men *do* set before themselves, but not about what non-subjective end *ought to* trump every subjective end. So this principle can't arise from experience, and must arise from pure reason.

¹¹ Here I put this proposition forward as a postulate. The reasons for it will be given in the last chapter.

¹² Don't think that the banal 'Don't do to anyone else what you wouldn't want done to you' could serve here as a guide or principle. It is only a consequence of the real principle, and a restricted and limited consequence at that. It can't as it stands be a universal law, because it doesn't provide a basis for duties to oneself, or benevolent duties to others (for many a man would gladly consent to not receiving benefits from others if that would let him off from showing benevolence to them!), or duties to mete out just punishments to others (for the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who sentences him). And so on.

National Unit Specification: Appendix to the statement of standards

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

NB: This Appendix is within the statement of standards, ie the mandatory requirements of the Unit

In this Unit candidates must develop the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and investigate normative theories and positions in the area of moral philosophy. The specific normative theories and aspects of emotivism to be studied are detailed in the mandatory content. Candidates must study ALL content.

Candidates must be familiar with and use philosophical terms which are relevant. A glossary of terms with which the candidate must be familiar is provided at the end of this Appendix.

Candidates study two specific normative moral theories which illustrate consequentialist and deontological approaches to moral judgements. The Utilitarian ideas of Bentham and Mill are studied to illustrate one possible consequentialist approach. The ideas of Kant are studied to illustrate one possible deontological approach.

Candidates must not simply learn to describe the specific normative theories. They must also learn to critically analyse and evaluate them. Critical analysis must involve identifying the reasoning and assumptions on which the specific theories are based and explaining the implications of these theories when making moral judgements. Critical evaluation must involve explaining the strengths and weaknesses of these theories as well as presenting a reasoned conclusion on their relative merits.

Candidates at Higher level cannot be expected to grasp the relatively complex ideas of Bentham, Mill and Kant through abstract study alone. **For this reason, teachers and lecturers should illustrate the theories, and their implications, strengths and weaknesses, with reference to relevant moral issues.** Specific moral issues are not prescribed. This is a matter for the professional judgement of teachers or lecturers based on the range of candidates studying the Unit and the resources available. However, **care should be taken to ensure that the moral issues selected are relevant to the mandatory content and Evidence Requirements of this Unit.** Candidates must refer to moral issues in response to questions in Unit and Course assessment.

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

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

The aspects of each theory which must be covered are outlined below:

a) Utilitarianism as an example of a consequentialist theory

Consequentialist approaches to ethics

The greatest happiness principle
Calculating potential happiness

Bentham's hedonic calculus
Mill's higher and lower pleasures
Mill's competent judges

Act v Rule Utilitarianism

Assessing each situation individually v following the rules which tend to promote the greatest happiness

Difficulties/weaknesses

The problem of quantifying happiness

The problems with consequences:
predictable or actual?

Short, medium or long-term? Local or global?

The problem with 'happiness': the happiness of sadists?

The problem of justice: sacrificing the minority for the sake of the majority

The potential of imposing unrealistically high moral demands

Alternative approaches

Ideal utilitarianism
Preference-satisfaction Utilitarianism

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

Deontological approaches to ethics

The sovereignty of reason
The Good Will
Duty v Inclination
The Categorical Imperative

Universalisability
Human beings as ends in themselves, never only as means to an end

Difficulties/weaknesses

The problem of ignoring consequences
The problem of identifying maxims
The problem of competing duties
The problem of ignoring other 'good' motives
The problem of potentially misguided perceptions of duty

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

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Glossary

Candidates must be familiar with the following terms.

Act Utilitarianism:

A type of Utilitarianism that holds that the moral worth of each action depends upon whether it individually on that occasion produced the greatest happiness.

Aggregate:

A sum total of something amassed out of parts.

Altruism:

An unselfish concern for the welfare of others. Its opposite is selfishness or egoism.

Analyse:

To scrutinise, examine or break something apart into its constituent components.

Categorical Imperative:

An unconditional principle that is binding on everyone. Often contrasted with hypothetical imperatives which are only binding if you want to achieve some particular goal or end.

Competent Judges:

A term used by Mill to describe people best placed to judge between higher and lower pleasures. Competent judges are those who have experienced both sorts of pleasure.

Consequentialism:

The view common to any first-order ethical theory that holds that the consequences of an action are the primary factor in calculating its moral worth.

Contradiction:

Asserting that something both is and is not the case at the same time. Eg. Barak Obama cannot be and not be the President at the same time. He either is, or he is not the President; he cannot be both.

Contradiction in Conception:

In Kant's philosophy this is a contradiction, which some impermissible maxims are guilty of, because they attempt to will a logically impossible state of affairs.

Contradiction in the Will:

In Kant's philosophy this is a contradiction which some impermissible maxims are guilty of because, although they are possible to conceive, they are inconsistent with other maxims which any rational person would wish to assent to at some point.

Deontology/Deontological:

The ethical theory that the moral worth of an action is intrinsic to the act itself rather than its consequences. Kant's **deontological** approach argued that moral obligation lay in doing one's duty.

Duty:

An action that a person is morally or legally obliged to perform.

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

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Duty Ethics:

Another word for deontological theories which focus on duty as the source of moral worth.

Equity/Equity Principle:

The first order-ethical theory that everyone's interests are of equal importance or at least are worthy of equal consideration.

Felicific Calculus:

Another name for the Hedonic Calculus.

Hedonic Calculus:

A method proposed by Jeremy Bentham of calculating how much utility an action produces.

Hedonism/Hedonic Principle:

The first-order ethical theory that whether an action is morally right or wrong depends on whether it promotes the maximum pleasure.

Higher Pleasures:

A term used by Mill to describe intellectual pleasures such as literature, art or music, as opposed to the 'lower' physical pleasures.

Hypothetical Imperative:

A conditional principle that is only binding if you want to achieve some particular goal or end. Contrasted by Kant with categorical imperatives which are unconditionally binding.

Ideal Utilitarianism:

A form of utilitarianism that holds that happiness is not the only intrinsic good but that things such as beauty and knowledge also have intrinsic value.

Imperfect Duty:

A duty that allows exceptions.

Inclination:

A tendency, disposition or desire to behave in a particular way or to choose one course of action over another. Kant contrasts inclination with duty as a motive for action.

Intentions:

What an agent wishes to achieve by an action.

Intrinsic:

Relating to the inherent nature of a thing, eg. skydiving is an intrinsically dangerous activity.

Intuition:

Knowledge of something without using any rational or empirical processes; immediately perceiving that something is true.

Justice:

Concerned with fairness and equality, particularly in the distribution of goods or punishments.

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

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Kantianism:

The moral views (and other views) of the Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant.

Kingdom of ends:

An imaginary state where the laws protect individual autonomy.

Laws of nature:

Recognized patterns in the behaviour of phenomena in the natural world such as Newton's laws of motion.

Lower Pleasures:

A term used by Mill to describe non-intellectual pleasures such as food, drink and sex.

Maxims:

Underlying principles of action or rules of conduct such as 'Don't steal'.

Meta-ethics:

The study of the underlying concepts and language of morality rather than the practical issues of what ought and ought not to be done.

Moral Dilemmas:

An ethical problem which involves choosing between competing courses of action which may appear to be both morally praiseworthy or both morally blameworthy.

Moral Law:

The law of duty as regards what is right and wrong. Kant claims we can identify the moral law by using reason while other philosophers have argued that we require God's guidance to help us identify the Moral Law.

Moral Philosophy:

The branch of philosophy that studies the concepts of right and wrong. It can be subdivided in Normative Ethics and Meta-ethics.

Motive:

The reason for doing something.

Normative Ethics:

The study of moral issues and the first order theories that attempt to resolve moral dilemmas. Concerned with answering the question of what it is that makes an action right or wrong.

Preference Utilitarianism:

A non-hedonistic form of Utilitarianism, advocated by Peter Singer among others, which states that the goal of our actions should be the satisfaction of preferences or desires rather than simply happiness or pleasure.

Perfect Duty:

A duty that does not allow exceptions.

Prudent:

Careful or sensible. Often contrasted in philosophical contexts with 'moral' or 'altruistic'. So paying our taxes would not count as moral, no matter if the poor benefit, because my reason is self-interested or prudential.

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

UNIT Moral Philosophy (Higher)

Qualitative:

Concerned with evaluating the non-measurable features of an object. A qualitative measure of a cake might be how tasty it is as opposed to a quantitative measure such as how heavy it is.

Quantitative:

Concerned with quantities or amounts of things. A quantitative measure of a cake might be how heavy it is as opposed to a qualitative measure such as how tasty it is.

Quantify:

To measure.

Rule Utilitarianism:

A type of Utilitarianism that holds that the moral worth of each action depends upon whether it accords with rules which in turn are justified by their tendency to promote the greatest happiness.

Special Obligations:

Moral obligations that one may have towards specific individuals by virtue of one's relationship with them, eg. to your parents or children.

Supererogatory Actions:

Actions which go beyond our ordinary duties as moral agents such as giving up your life to save another, which though morally commendable is not generally regarded as obligatory.

Teleological:

Explaining things in terms of their goal or ends. Sometimes used as a synonym for consequentialist.

Universalise/Universalisability:

The ability of moral judgements to be applied equally to all in similar situations.

Utilitarianism:

The first-order moral theory that an action is right if it maximises aggregate happiness.