

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Epistemology (Advanced Higher)

NUMBER D425 13

COURSE Philosophy (Advanced Higher)

SUMMARY

This unit seeks to develop knowledge and understanding of some central problems and issues in theories of knowledge, analysing and critically evaluating them in a reasoned and structured manner.

OUTCOMES

- 1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the problem or issue.
- 2 Analyse in a reasoned and structured manner one response to the problem or issue.
- 3 Evaluate in a reasoned and structured manner the response to the problem or issue.

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, candidates would normally be expected to have completed a course or units where appropriate:

- in Philosophy at Higher
- in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies at Higher
- in a social subject at an equivalent level

This unit will be available to more mature candidates who have an interest in the subject matter and can demonstrate appropriate ability at this level.

Administrative Information

Superclass: PB

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Advanced Higher.

CORE SKILLS

Core skills for Advanced Higher remain subject to confirmation and details will be available at a later date.

Additional information about core skills is published in *Automatic Certification of Core Skills in National Qualifications* (SQA, 1999).

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

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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.

In relation to (a) Gettier's challenge to the traditional definition of knowledge and (b) theories of perception:

OUTCOME 1

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the problem or issue.

Performance criteria

- (a) Present a detailed description of the problem or issue.
- (b) Make relevant reference to appropriate sources.

OUTCOME 2

Analyse in a reasoned and structured manner one response to the problem or issue.

Performance criteria

- (a) Present a detailed account of the response.
- (b) Explain how the response can be seen as an attempt to deal with the problem or issue.

OUTCOME 3

Evaluate in a reasoned and structured manner the response to the problem or issue.

Performance criteria

- (a) Evaluate in a reasoned and structured manner the merits and deficiencies of the response.
- (b) Present a conclusion with supporting arguments.

Evidence requirements

Evidence for all outcomes will be provided in the form of an essay for each prescribed issue. Therefore two essays are required: one in relation to the tripartite definition of knowledge, one on theories of perception.

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

GUIDANCE ON CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

This mandatory unit will explore the some issues and problems of knowledge in the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy. Candidates will critically examine the definition of knowledge as justified, true belief.

Candidates will explore the implications of Gettier's counter examples to the traditional definition of knowledge as justified, true belief. They will examine responses to Gettier, and will move to a consideration of modifications of the tripartite theory of knowledge including the causal theory of knowledge and the infeasibility condition.

Candidates will explore two theories of perception, namely, direct realism and indirect realism (or sense data theory).

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

Candidates should clearly present the definition of knowledge, the standard formula of which is as follows: A knows that p, if and only if:

- 1 p is true.
- 2 A believes that p.
- 3 A has sufficient evidence that p.

(Where A represents any person – for example the candidate – and p represents any proposition – for example, the earth is round.)

Knowledge and understanding of this definition will be demonstrated through understanding the distinction between belief and knowledge in relation to this definition.

In their analysis and evaluation, candidates must refer to contemporary counter-examples to the standard definition of knowledge. The most accessible and famous of counter-examples are those of Gettier in the short paper entitled '*Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?*' Candidates must explain clearly why Gettier's counter-examples challenge the definition of knowledge as justified, true belief. Candidates will consider counter arguments to Gettier which include modifying the tripartite definition of knowledge so as to deal with the counter examples of Gettier. A more radical suggestion will be presented in the form of a new definition of knowledge: causal theory of knowledge.

In relation to two theories of perception, candidates will be expected to demonstrate understanding, analysis and evaluation of direct realism and indirect realism, and there will be a natural tendency to contrast these theories in the learning and teaching of these. Candidates' attention should be focused on perception as a source of certainty.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Candidates must present a detailed account of the two theories of perception. They must evaluate the following associated problems with direct realism: the argument from illusion and the arguments from science (to include the causal argument, the time-lag argument, and the argument that mature scientific theories present a world fundamentally unlike the world given in perception). Candidates should know that these are arguments in favour of the existence of 'sense-data'. The associated problem with indirect realism is that it leads to many seemingly insoluble problems and ultimately to scepticism. There is also the problem of the external world; the problem of other minds; and the problem of translating propositions referring to material objects into propositions referring only to sense-data.

Candidates may wish to reconsider the coherence of the arguments in favour of sense-data, and the possibility of retaining some form of moderate, direct realism or finally submitting to scepticism.

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

Teaching staff should use assessment judiciously and efficiently. It should be used to provide evidence of the achievement of all the learning outcomes in the units. A balance must be struck between the need for some targeted assessment of specific knowledge and skills and for assessment instruments which encompass two or more learning outcomes. This allows for a more integrated approach to skills.

It is not necessary for a separate piece of assessment to be set for each performance criterion, although responses of some length are required at this level. The evidence can be gathered during and/or at the end of the unit. The evidence should be composed of assessments relating to each of the outcomes with equal weighting being given to each outcome.

The marking scheme would reflect the standard embodied in the performance criteria. This would allow the evidence to be considered as a whole. The level of attainment required for successful completion of the unit should represent satisfactory attainment of the outcomes and, by inference, satisfactory coverage of all the performance criteria.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This unit specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. Special needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative outcomes for units. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Special Assessment and Certification Arrangements for Candidates with Special Needs/Candidates whose First Language is not English* (SQA, 1998).