



National 5 Philosophy

Course code:	C854 75
Course assessment code:	X854 75
SCQF:	level 5 (24 SCQF credit points)
Valid from:	session 2017–18

The course specification provides detailed information about the course and course assessment to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year. It describes the structure of the course and the course assessment in terms of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are assessed.

This document is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information you need to deliver the course.

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Course overview

The course consists of 24 SCQF credit points which includes time for preparation for course assessment. The notional length of time for a candidate to complete the course is 160 hours.

The course assessment has two components.

Component	Marks	Duration
Component 1: question paper	80	2 hours and 20 minutes
Component 2: assignment	20	See course assessment section

Recommended entry	Progression
<p>Entry to this course is at the discretion of the centre.</p> <p>Candidates should have achieved the fourth curriculum level or the National 4 People and Society course or the National 4 Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies course or equivalent qualifications and/or experience prior to starting this course.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Higher Philosophy course◆ Higher Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies course◆ other SQA qualifications in social studies, social science or related areas at SCQF level 5 or SCQF level 6

Conditions of award

The grade awarded is based on the total marks achieved across all course assessment components.

Course rationale

National Courses reflect Curriculum for Excellence values, purposes and principles. They offer flexibility, provide more time for learning, more focus on skills and applying learning, and scope for personalisation and choice.

Every course provides opportunities for candidates to develop breadth, challenge and application. The focus and balance of assessment is tailored to each subject area.

The course builds on candidates' existing knowledge and curiosity about philosophy.

Candidates are introduced to the structure of arguments. They examine philosophical ideas and are encouraged to take an enquiring and reflective approach to the study of philosophy.

Purpose and aims

The course develops reasoning skills by focusing on abstract concepts and philosophical problems.

The course:

- ◆ develops basic knowledge and understanding of philosophy
- ◆ encourages candidates' ability to engage with abstract thought
- ◆ offers candidates insight into the ideas of others

Candidates develop a range of skills, including:

- ◆ analysing arguments
- ◆ recalling, selecting and using specified knowledge
- ◆ explaining philosophical ideas and theories
- ◆ explaining criticisms of philosophical ideas and theories
- ◆ presenting ideas in a logical sequence in an extended piece of writing

Who is this course for?

This course is suitable for learners with the recommended entry level, who have an interest in philosophy.

Course content

The National 5 Philosophy course has three areas of study. Each area offers opportunities for candidates to focus on particular skills.

Arguments in action

Candidates develop the ability to examine and assess the reliability of simple arguments.

Knowledge and doubt

Candidates examine theories regarding the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. They are introduced to criticisms of these theories.

Moral philosophy

Candidates examine theories regarding moral decision-making and how these theories might be applied to specific situations. They are introduced to criticisms of these theories.

Skills, knowledge and understanding

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course

The following provides a broad overview of the subject skills, knowledge and understanding developed in the course:

- ◆ analysing simple arguments
- ◆ recognising common fallacies used in arguments
- ◆ knowing, understanding and being able to explain philosophical positions and theories
- ◆ applying philosophical positions and theories to specific situations
- ◆ explaining criticisms of philosophical positions and theories
- ◆ investigating a philosophical question or claim
- ◆ presenting ideas in a logical sequence in an extended piece of writing

Skills, knowledge and understanding for the course assessment

The following provides details of skills, knowledge and understanding sampled in the course assessment.

Component 1: question paper

The question paper samples from the following areas of study:

Arguments in action

Candidates must be able to identify, explain and give examples of the following terms to show their understanding:

- ◆ statement
- ◆ argument
- ◆ premise

- ◆ conclusion
- ◆ valid and invalid

Candidates must be able to:

- ◆ distinguish statements from questions, commands, exclamations and arguments
- ◆ identify premises and conclusions in an argument
- ◆ present an argument in standard form
- ◆ analyse simple arguments
- ◆ identify, explain and give examples of the following common fallacies:
 - attacking the person
 - false dilemma
 - illegitimate appeal to authority
 - slippery slope

Knowledge and doubt

Candidates must understand and be able to explain the following concepts:

- ◆ the distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that' — knowledge as 'justified, true belief' (the tripartite theory of knowledge)
- ◆ empiricism — all knowledge of the world ultimately depends on experience (Locke's blank sheet of paper)
- ◆ rationalism — at least some knowledge of the world can be gained through reason and innate ideas (Leibniz' block of marble)
- ◆ scepticism — the claim that knowledge (perhaps in just some cases; perhaps in all cases) is unattainable

For Descartes, candidates must be able to comment on:

- ◆ method of doubt: senses, dreaming, and deceiving God argument
- ◆ malicious demon
- ◆ the Cogito

For Hume, candidates must be able to comment on:

- ◆ arguments concerning the origin of ideas
- ◆ impressions and ideas including simple and complex ideas
- ◆ missing shade of blue

Candidates should be able to demonstrate their understanding of the listed content of Descartes and Hume and explain criticisms (strengths and/or weaknesses) of these positions and theories.

Candidates are not expected to engage with the original texts of Descartes and Hume.

Moral philosophy

Candidates must be able to explain two moral theories: Utilitarianism and one other.

Candidates must be able to apply these theories to specific situations.

For Utilitarianism:

- ◆ the Greatest Happiness Principle
- ◆ consequentialism; equity; hedonism
- ◆ calculating potential happiness: Bentham's hedonic calculus; Mill's higher and lower pleasures
- ◆ three common criticisms of Utilitarianism: evil pleasures; difficulty of predicting consequences; tyranny of the majority

For the other moral theory:

- ◆ the main features
- ◆ three common criticisms

Component 2: assignment

Candidates are required to investigate a philosophical question or claim.

This includes:

- ◆ introducing the chosen philosophical question or claim and describing responses to it
- ◆ using and analysing relevant information relating to the chosen philosophical question or claim
- ◆ explaining criticisms of responses relating to the chosen philosophical question or claim
- ◆ presenting ideas in a logical sequence throughout the assignment

Skills, knowledge and understanding included in the course are appropriate to the SCQF level of the course. The SCQF level descriptors give further information on characteristics and expected performance at each SCQF level (www.scqf.org.uk).

Skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work

This course helps candidates to develop broad, generic skills. These skills are based on [SQA's Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#) and draw from the following main skills areas:

1 Literacy

- 1.1 Reading
- 1.2 Writing
- 1.3 Listening and talking

5 Thinking skills

- 5.3 Applying
- 5.4 Analysing and evaluation

These skills must be built into the course where there are appropriate opportunities and the level should be appropriate to the level of the course.

Further information on building in skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work is given in the course support notes.

Course assessment

Course assessment is based on the information provided in this document.

The course assessment meets the key purposes and aims of the course by addressing:

- ◆ breadth — drawing on knowledge and skills from across the course
- ◆ application — requiring application of knowledge and/or skills in practical or theoretical contexts as appropriate

This enables candidates to:

- ◆ demonstrate knowledge and understanding of philosophical positions and theories from across the course to answer questions in a question paper
- ◆ select, use and analyse relevant knowledge to investigate a philosophical question or claim

Course assessment structure: question paper

Question paper

80 marks

The question paper samples philosophical knowledge and understanding from across the course. Candidates are required to integrate and apply knowledge and understanding to respond to questions.

The question paper gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ analysing simple arguments
- ◆ recognising common fallacies used in arguments
- ◆ knowing, understanding and being able to explain philosophical positions and theories
- ◆ applying philosophical positions and theories to specific situations
- ◆ explaining criticisms of philosophical positions and theories

The question paper has 80 marks out of a total of 100 marks. Two questions are worth 30 marks each and one question is worth 20 marks. The question paper therefore constitutes 80% of the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the question paper

The question paper is set and marked by SQA, and conducted in centres under conditions specified for external examinations by SQA. Candidates complete this in 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Specimen question papers for National 5 courses are published on SQA's website. These illustrate the standard, structure and requirements of the question papers candidates sit. The specimen papers also include marking instructions.

Course assessment structure: assignment

Assignment

20 marks

The assignment gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ introducing the chosen philosophical question or claim and describing responses to it
- ◆ using and analysing relevant information relating to the chosen philosophical question or claim
- ◆ explaining criticisms of responses relating to the chosen philosophical question or claim
- ◆ presenting ideas in a logical sequence throughout the assignment

Candidates do this by choosing and investigating a philosophical question or claim, and producing a report based on this investigation.

The assignment has 20 marks out of a total of 100 marks for course assessment. The assignment therefore constitutes 20% of the course assessment.

Setting, conducting and marking the assignment

The assignment gives candidates an open choice of topics within guidelines set by SQA. Evidence is submitted to SQA for external marking. All marking is quality assured by SQA.

Assessment conditions

The assignment has two stages:

- ◆ research
- ◆ production of evidence

Time

Candidates choose and investigate a philosophical question or claim. The research stage includes choosing an issue, collecting evidence, organising, evaluating and preparation time for the production of evidence. This stage has been designed to be capable of completion over a notional period of 8 hours.

The production of evidence stage is when the candidate produces a report on the issue. This must be completed within 1 hour and in one sitting. Candidates should undertake the production of evidence stage in time to meet the submission date set by SQA.

Supervision, control and authentication

The research stage is conducted under some supervision and control. This means that, although candidates may complete part of the work outwith the learning and teaching setting, assessors should put in place processes for monitoring progress and ensuring that the work is the candidate's own and that plagiarism has not taken place.

For example:

- ◆ interim progress meetings with candidates
- ◆ questioning
- ◆ candidate's record of activity/progress
- ◆ assessor observation

Group work approaches are acceptable as part of the research stage. However, there must be clear evidence for each candidate to show that they have met the evidence requirements.

The **production of evidence stage** is conducted under a high degree of supervision and control. This means that:

- ◆ candidates must be in direct sight of the assessor (or other responsible person) during the period of the assessment
- ◆ candidates must not communicate with each other
- ◆ candidates may use their Philosophy Resource Sheet for support but must enclose it with their report

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

Resources

During the research stage, there are no restrictions on the resources to which candidates may have access.

During the final production of evidence stage, candidates should only have access to evidence collected during the research stage and recorded on the Philosophy Resource Sheet.

The purpose of the Resource Sheet is to support the candidate during the writing stage. It should be no more than 200 words in length. It may contain:

- ◆ a plan of the assignment
- ◆ quotes, extracts, diagrams, charts, tables
- ◆ bullet lists

The Resource Sheet is not assessed. However, it must be included with the written report from the candidate.

Reasonable assistance

Assessors should provide reasonable guidance on the types of issue which enable candidates to meet all the requirements of the assignment. They may also give guidance to candidates on the likely availability and accessibility of resources for their chosen issue.

Candidates should work on their research with minimum support from the assessor.

Assessors must exercise their professional responsibility in ensuring that evidence submitted by a candidate is the candidate's own work.

Candidates must undertake the production of evidence independently. However, reasonable assistance may be provided prior to the production of evidence taking place. The term 'reasonable assistance' is used to try to balance the need for support with the need to avoid giving too much assistance. If a candidate requires more than what is deemed to be 'reasonable assistance', they may not be ready for assessment or it may be that they have been entered for the wrong level of qualification.

Reasonable assistance may be given on a generic basis to a class or group of candidates, eg advice on how to develop a project plan. It may also be given to candidates on an individual basis. When reasonable assistance is given on a one-to-one basis in the context of something that a candidate has already produced or demonstrated, there is a danger that it becomes support for assessment and assessors need to be aware that this may be going beyond reasonable assistance.

In the research stage, reasonable assistance may include:

- ◆ directing candidates to the instructions for candidates
- ◆ clarifying instructions/requirements of the task
- ◆ advising candidates on the choice of issue
- ◆ advising candidates on possible sources of information
- ◆ arranging visits to enable gathering of evidence
- ◆ interim progress checks

In preparing for the production of evidence stage, reasonable assistance may include advising candidates of the nature and volume of specified resources which may be used to support the production of evidence.

At any stage, reasonable assistance does not include:

- ◆ providing the issue
- ◆ directing candidates to specific resources to be used
- ◆ providing model answers
- ◆ providing detailed feedback on drafts, including marking

Evidence to be gathered

The following candidate evidence is required for this assessment:

- ◆ Philosophy Resource Sheet: this must be a single sheet of A4 with no more than 200 words
- ◆ candidate assignment evidence produced under a high degree of supervision

Volume

There is no word count for the assignment. However, the Philosophy Resource Sheet should have no more than 200 words on it.

Grading

A candidate's overall grade is determined by their performance across the course assessment. The course assessment is graded A–D on the basis of the total mark for all course assessment components.

Grade description for C

For the award of grade C, candidates will typically have demonstrated successful performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Grade description for A

For the award of grade A, candidates will typically have demonstrated a consistently high level of performance in relation to the skills, knowledge and understanding for the course.

Equality and inclusion

This course is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

For guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs, please follow the link to the assessment arrangements web page: www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Further information

The following reference documents provide useful information and background.

- ◆ [National 5 Philosophy subject page](#)
- ◆ [Assessment arrangements web page](#)
- ◆ [Building the Curriculum 3–5](#)
- ◆ [Design Principles for National Courses](#)
- ◆ [Guide to Assessment](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Framework and SCQF level descriptors](#)
- ◆ [SCQF Handbook](#)
- ◆ [SQA Skills Framework: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work](#)
- ◆ [Coursework Authenticity: A Guide for Teachers and Lecturers](#)
- ◆ [Educational Research Reports](#)
- ◆ [SQA Guidelines on e-assessment for Schools](#)
- ◆ [SQA e-assessment web page](#)

Administrative information

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History of changes to course specification

Version	Description of change	Authorised by	Date

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