Course Report 2015

Subject	Philosophy
Level	National 5

The statistics used in this report have been compiled before the completion of any Post Results Services.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published assessment and marking instructions for the examination.

Section 1: Comments on the Assessment

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates generally performed well in some areas of the question paper and less well in others. Many candidates were well prepared in most areas to answer the questions that were set. However, some candidates did not maintain a sustained focus on what the questions asked. This was evidenced by candidates not developing answers or including material that was too much of a tangential nature.

There was a complete range of marks from high to very low.

Component 2: Assignment

Again, as with the question paper, candidates performed well in some areas of the Assignment and less well in others. Many candidates selected a claim or question that was clearly philosophical in nature. However, some candidates chose claims or questions that did not lend themselves easily to philosophical discussion.

The Assignment gives candidates the opportunity to extend their knowledge and develop their thinking skills, and this was seen in the work of some candidates.

Section 2: Comments on candidate performance

Component 1: Question paper

Most candidates found the paper accessible, although a few found it too demanding. Marks ranged from very low to high. The majority of candidates had an accurate idea of what most of the questions were asking them to do. However, some candidates produced incomplete or irrelevant responses.

Some candidates demonstrated in their answers that they had studied the material in some depth. Other candidates did not show sufficient focus in their answers to achieve full marks.

Overall, the level of literacy was good.

Component 2: Assignment

Overall, most candidates performed well in the Assignment. However, a few candidates did not write down their chosen question or claim. For some candidates, the body of their Assignment did not match their chosen question or claim.

Several candidates used bullet points in their Assignments. This is not recommended — candidates should write in fully structured sentences.

There appeared to be some misunderstanding from a few candidates as to what constitutes a source — 'the Big Bang', for example, is not a source. Some candidates did not fully identify sources. It should be clear to the marker who or what the source is. It is good practice to list sources and where they can be found. Sources must be relevant to the question or claim.

The Assignment is to carry out an investigation and produce a report of between 800 and 1200 words. It is important that candidates adhere to the required word count.

Overall, the level of literacy was good.

Section 3: Areas in which candidates performed well

Component 1: Question paper

Arguments in Action

Question 1 (a): Most candidates knew how to define an argument in philosophy and scored highly in this question.

Question 1 (b): Nearly all candidates were able to add missing premises or conclusions to form valid arguments.

Question 1 (d): Most candidates correctly identified the informal fallacy.

Knowledge and Doubt

Question 2 (e): Most candidates explained accurately why Hume believed that we do not have innate ideas.

Component 2: Assignment

Section A

Most candidates adequately described the issues, reasons or arguments relating to their chosen question or claim.

Section B

Most candidates adequately described the content of sources which related to their question or claim.

Section 4: Areas which candidates found demanding

Component 1: Question paper

Arguments in Action

Question 1(c): Some candidates struggled to extrapolate premises from an everyday argument.

Knowledge and Doubt

Question 2 (a): Some candidates had difficulty explaining what a sceptic is in the context of philosophy.

Question 2(b): Some candidates had difficulty identifying a sceptical argument.

Question 2(c): Many candidates simply rehearsed the arguments from Meditation 1 rather than address the focus of the question.

Question 2(d): Many candidates did not demonstrate that they knew criticisms of Descartes.

Question 2(f): Candidates found this question very challenging. The wording of this question virtually replicated the wording of the Course Assessment Specification but most candidates could not explain Hume's theory about how we arrive at knowledge of cause and effect.

Moral Philosophy

Question 3 (b) (i): A significant number of candidates did not show understanding of how Rule Utilitarians arrive at their rules.

Question 3 (c) and question 3 (e): Both these questions required candidates to apply moral theories to scenarios. While candidates often discussed the scenarios at some length, they often failed to apply the moral theories to the scenarios.

Component 2: Assignment

Section C

A few candidates did not relate the content of this section to their overall question or claim.

Section D

Some candidates did not explain strengths and weaknesses of the philosophical positions which they were investigating.

Section E

Some candidates need to be aware that they should present an informed personal view on the philosophical question or claim.

Section 5: Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Component 1: Question paper

Candidates performed best in the Arguments in Action section. To perform similarly across the question paper, they need to be well versed in all topics listed in the Course Assessment Specification. Candidates should be made aware of the full content of the Course Assessment Specification.

There is no choice of questions for candidates in the exam so it is essential that candidates are prepared for all aspects of the Course. For example, candidates need to be prepared to answer questions on both Descartes and Hume. This is a change from the Intermediate 2 question paper, which allowed candidates to answer questions on either Descartes or Hume.

Two useful documents on the SQA website for preparing candidates for the question paper are:

♦ Philosophy Specimen Question Paper National 5
♦ Guidance on the use of past paper questions for National 5 Philosophy

These documents are useful in terms of preparation for the structure and style of questions. The Marking Instructions give guidance on the interpretation of command words. It is also important to be aware of the different mark range for National 5 Philosophy — a mark allocation of 1 – 6 marks, in contrast to Intermediate 2 Philosophy which has a mark range of 1 – 20. Candidates should avoid extensive scene-setting, given that 6 marks is the maximum allocation for any part of a question.

Component 2: Assignment

The purpose of the assignment is to enable candidates to carry out a basic philosophical investigation. They are required to show understanding of their chosen philosophical question or claim.

Centres should advise candidates that copying and pasting text from the internet is plagiarism unless acknowledge . All quotations should be acknowledged. Assessors in centres should put in place mechanisms to authenticate candidate evidence.

Candidates have a free choice of philosophical question or claim but their chosen question or claim must meet the criteria for successful completion of the assignment.

It is particularly important that the chosen philosophical question or claim allows the candidate to carry out a philosophical investigation.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2014	109

Number of resulted entries in 2015	239

Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 80				
A	20.1%	20.1%	48	54
B	13.4%	33.5%	32	46
C	18.0%	51.5%	43	38
D	11.7%	63.2%	28	34
No award	36.8%	-	88	-