

Special Curriculum for Excellence Update: Higher Philosophy (September 2013)

This Update letter contains important advice and guidance on revisions to the Course requirements for the new Curriculum for Excellence Higher Philosophy Course and will support your planning for its implementation from August 2014.

Key messages

Following the development of National 5 and feedback from teachers and lecturers, revisions have been made to the Course requirements for Higher Philosophy. These revisions:

- ◆ improve progression and differentiation from National 5, offering appropriate learner pathways
- ◆ clarify mandatory content for those taking Course assessment
- ◆ improve coherence and consistency across Unit Outcomes and Assessments Standards

These revisions will be incorporated into the development of assessment support materials at Higher. Revised Course requirements for Higher Philosophy will be published by May 2014 after the development of assessment support materials for Higher is complete.

Assessment support

Over 2013 to 2014, we will produce a range of assessment support including:

- ◆ three packages of Unit Assessment Support: Unit-by-Unit; portfolio; combined (by April 2014)
- ◆ Specimen Question Paper and Marking Instructions (by February 2014)
- ◆ Assignment: General Information (by March 2014)
- ◆ Assignment: Assessment Task (by March 2014)

Subject Implementation Events

A Higher Philosophy Subject Implementation Event is already scheduled for Tuesday 4 March 2014.

In light of revisions to Course requirements, and to support you in planning for the implementation of Higher Philosophy, an additional and earlier Higher Philosophy Subject Implementation Event will be held on 25 November 2013.

These events will give you the opportunity to find out more about the delivery and assessment of the new qualifications. Presentations and workshops will cover Unit assessment guidance, specimen question papers, coursework and marking instructions.

Further information — including instructions about how to book a place — is available here: www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/63052.html

We are developing the specimen question paper and Coursework information based on the following requirements.

Advice and guidance on revisions to Course requirements

We have clarified the skills, knowledge and understanding required. These are:

- ◆ the ability to analyse and evaluate arguments, theories of knowledge and moral theories
- ◆ the ability to understand and explain the implications and consequences of arguments and theories
- ◆ the ability to express reasoned views
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of argument structure, philosophical techniques and errors in reasoning
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of key theories of knowledge.
- ◆ knowledge and understanding of key moral philosophical theories

The **question paper** will give candidates an opportunity to demonstrate these skills and apply this knowledge and understanding. Other revisions include:

- ◆ question paper is now worth 60 marks and has been extended to 2 hours and 15 minutes — to allow additional time for candidates to complete the question paper.
- ◆ question paper has three sections worth 20 marks each, assessing skills and sampling knowledge from Arguments in Action, Knowledge and Doubt, and Moral Philosophy — to better reflect the Course aims
- ◆ revisions to the mandatory content for the question paper — to clarify the mandatory content required, the level of demand and progression from National 5

The **assignment** now offers learners an open choice of philosophical question to be researched and will require candidates to:

- ◆ identify a philosophical question for study
- ◆ analyse the implications of the question, including relevant philosophical principles or concepts
- ◆ organise and structure information
- ◆ analyse a philosophical position on the question
- ◆ evaluate a philosophical position on the question
- ◆ express a reasoned and well-structured conclusion on how successfully the philosophical position has responded to the question
- ◆ explain supporting information and potential challenges or counter-arguments

Further mandatory information on Course coverage

The following gives details of mandatory skills, knowledge and understanding for the Higher Philosophy Course. Course assessment will involve assessing the skills and sampling knowledge and understanding.

Section 1 — Arguments in Action

In this section, all candidates should be able to apply the knowledge and skills identified in the *Arguments in Action* Unit. This should include the ability to explain argument structure using argument diagrams. Candidates should be able to analyse and evaluate the success of arguments in given sources, including evaluating the uses and implications of the following philosophical techniques and cognitive errors:

Philosophical techniques and factors affecting credibility:

- ◆ the role of plausibility on the credibility of an argument
- ◆ the role of ad hominem
- ◆ the role of appeals to emotion
- ◆ the role of appeals to authority
- ◆ the purpose of describing an argument as a 'slippery slope'

Other philosophical techniques:

- ◆ thought experiments
- ◆ analogical arguments (including distinguishing these from analogical explanations)
- ◆ counter examples
- ◆ appeals to intuition/counter-intuition
- ◆ inductive and deductive reasoning
- ◆ identifying consistency/inconsistency
- ◆ identifying and resolving ambiguity

Cognitive errors:

- ◆ confirmation bias
- ◆ denying the antecedent
- ◆ affirming the consequent
- ◆ post hoc ergo propter hoc

Section 2 — Knowledge and Doubt:

In this section, all candidates should be able to apply the knowledge and skills identified in the *Knowledge and Doubt* Unit. This should include the ability to analyse and evaluate rationalist and empiricist theories of knowledge, with reference to the following:

Key concepts:

- ◆ scepticism
- ◆ empiricism
- ◆ rationalism

- ◆ a priori
- ◆ a posteriori
- ◆ innate ideas
- ◆ tabula rasa

Hume:

- ◆ *Enquiries* Section 2 (Impressions and Ideas, the missing shade of blue)
- ◆ *Enquiries*, Section 4 Part A (Causation)
- ◆ *Enquiries* Section 12 (Hume's stance on scepticism)

Descartes:

- ◆ Meditation 1 and Meditation 2 (Cogito, Method of Doubt)
- ◆ Meditation 3 (Trademark Argument, Clear and Distinct ideas)

Section 3 — Moral Philosophy

In this section, all candidates should be able to apply the knowledge and skills identified in the *Moral Philosophy* Unit. This should include the ability to explain, analyse and evaluate utilitarianism and Kantian ethics, as well as the ability to analyse and evaluate the theories when applied to given situations or issues.

Utilitarianism

- ◆ distinctions between classical hedonistic utilitarianism, ideal utilitarianism and preference satisfaction utilitarianism
- ◆ hedonic calculus
- ◆ higher and lower pleasures
- ◆ distinction between act and rule utilitarianism
- ◆ the adequacy of utilitarianism as a moral theory

Kantian ethics

- ◆ the Categorical Imperative
- ◆ the process of universalising the maxim
- ◆ distinction between treating someone as 'an end' and treating someone as 'a means only'
- ◆ contradiction in conception and contradiction in the will
- ◆ distinction between perfect duties and imperfect duties
- ◆ the adequacy of Kantian ethics as a moral theory

The skills, knowledge and understanding of the Course is developed through three Units: *Arguments in Action*; *Knowledge and Doubt*, and *Moral Philosophy*. Each Unit offers opportunities to develop philosophical critical thinking skills and knowledge of philosophical theories.

We are developing Unit assessment support packs based on the following requirements.

Higher Philosophy Unit Requirements

Arguments in Action

Candidates will analyse arguments and use examples to explain:

- ◆ the difference between statements and arguments
- ◆ the difference between deductive and inductive reasoning
- ◆ a key philosophical technique
- ◆ a philosophical fallacy

They will also evaluate arguments by analysing an argument used in an issue or debate and:

- ◆ making reference to a source
- ◆ analysing how a philosophical technique is being used
- ◆ constructing an appropriate argument diagram
- ◆ making a reasoned and well-structured judgement on the success of the argument

Knowledge and Doubt

Candidates will apply their knowledge and understanding of epistemology by explaining:

- ◆ rationalism, empiricism and scepticism
- ◆ key criticisms of rationalism and empiricism

They will also evaluate rationalist or empiricist arguments by:

- ◆ analysing a key argument in a rationalist or empiricist text
- ◆ expressing a reasoned and well-structured conclusion on the success of the argument

Moral Philosophy

Candidates will apply their knowledge and understanding of moral theories by explaining:

- ◆ the underlying philosophical principles involved in one moral theory, with reference to an appropriate philosopher

They will also evaluate moral theories by:

- ◆ analysing how a moral theory would respond to a specific situation or issue
- ◆ explaining one possible strength and weakness of that response
- ◆ expressing a reasoned and well-structured conclusion on how successfully the theory accounts for moral decision-making, with reference to the situation or issue