Higher Philosophy: model questions

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Introduction

This resource provides model questions for Higher Philosophy. It covers the three course sections, and questions are referenced against the mandatory content specified in the course specification. This resource is not mandatory and is intended as an additional support for teachers and lecturers delivering the course. Teachers and lecturers can use this resource to support delivery and understanding of the course.

These questions and marking instructions are illustrative; questions in course assessments may have different wordings and/or different mark allocations.

Note that these questions are not exhaustive and are intended to exemplify ways in which areas of course content may be asked about in a course assessment. Question papers may contain questions about different aspects of a content area or may use different command words when assessing an aspect of content. For full information on course content, refer to the Higher Philosophy Course Specification on the Higher Philosophy subject page

Teachers and lecturers should take care if using questions from this resource to support assessment activity, as these are in the public domain and may not have strong predictive value. Teachers and lecturers should ensure that any assessment samples appropriately from the skills, knowledge and understanding specified in the course specification.

Arguments in action model questions

Area of course content	Question	Mark	Marking instructions
Distinguishing arguments from descriptions, explanations, and summaries	Does the following passage contain an argument? Give reasons for your answer. The athlete's bone density is calculated by a computer. The results are then compared to others of the same body weight, body type and age.	2	Any two of the following: ♦ The passage does not contain an argument. Although it makes a claim, it does not provide reasons to support that claim. **(1 mark)** ♦ The passage is not trying to convince the reader of something using evidence. **(1 mark)** ♦ This passage is a description of the process of measuring and comparing the bone density of athletes. **(1 mark)**
Inference indicators for premises and conclusions	Read the following argument. Universities must have departments that carry out research, since research is essential and there are few other institutions that support it. What is the function of the inference indicator word 'since' in this argument?	1	Any one of the following: ♦ 'since' functions as a premise indicator **(1 mark)** ♦ 'since' indicates that the following point is intended to provide support for the conclusion. **(1 mark)**

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Describing what makes the premises in an argument acceptable	State three factors that make a premise in an argument acceptable.	3	Any three from the following: The premise: ♦ is known a priori to be true **(1 mark)** ♦ is known to be true or can be accepted as true **(1 mark)** ♦ is a matter of common knowledge **(1 mark)** ♦ is plausible, that is, it is reasonable to take it to be true **(1 mark)** ♦ is unambiguous **(1 mark)** ♦ appeals to an appropriate authority **(1 mark)** ♦ properly represents the facts pertaining to the conclusion **(1 mark)**
Describing what makes the premises in an argument relevant to the conclusion	State three factors that make the premises in an argument relevant to the conclusion.	3	Any three of the following: The premise: ♦ provides some justification to support the conclusion **(1 mark)** ♦ gives support to another relevant premise **(1 mark)** ♦ contains an appropriate analogy **(1 mark)** ♦ attacks the claim rather than the person putting forward the claim **(1 mark)**
Describing what makes the premises in an argument sufficient to draw the conclusion	State the factors that make the premises in an argument sufficient to draw the conclusion.	2	Any two of the following: ♦ the premises are acceptable and relevant **(1 mark)** ♦ the premises are enough to engender a well-founded confidence in the conclusion **(1 mark)** ♦ in a valid argument the premises, if true, are sufficient to prove the conclusion is true **(1 mark)**

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Deductive validity and inductive strength	A student wrote the following answer to the question: what is the difference between deductive and inductive arguments? 'A deductive argument is one where we move from general premises to particular conclusions. An inductive argument is when we move from particular premises to general conclusions.' Explain why the student's answer is completely wrong. Support your answer with examples.	4	To gain 4 marks, candidates must clearly show they understand that the answer given in the question is wrong. Candidates can gain marks for the following points: ♦ There are deductive arguments that do not involve reasoning from general premises to particular conclusions. **(1 mark)** ♦ This could be because they do not include any general premises or because they reason from a general claim to another general claim. **(1 mark)** 1 mark for an appropriate example of a deductive argument that does not involve reasoning from general premises to particular conclusions: ♦ P1 — all dogs are mammals ♦ P2 — all mammals are warm-blooded ♦ C — all dogs are warm-blooded Some inductive arguments argue from the general to the particular. **(1 mark)** 1 mark for an appropriate example of an inductive argument that argues from the general to the particular: Most dogs are lazy, so my dog Fergus is lazy too. **(1 mark)** Candidates may also choose to include correct definitions of deductive and inductive arguments in their responses and should gain marks for this approach. For example: 1 mark for explaining deductive reasoning: deductive reasoning attempts to draw certain conclusions from a given set of premises. 1 mark for explaining inductive reasoning: inductive reasoning attempts to draw probable conclusions from a given set of premises.

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Recognising the criteria that might be used to distinguish legitimate appeals to emotion from fallacious appeals to emotion	Examine the following argument and discuss whether it contains an appeal to emotion. Give reasons for your answer. Whales are massive creatures who have patrolled our oceans for thousands of years. They are under threat from plastics, hunters and general pollution caused by human beings. What right have we, puny humans, to kill these majestic mammals of the oceans?	3	No marks for simply stating that the argument does or does not contain an appeal to emotion. Candidates can gain marks for the following: 1 mark for a definition of an appeal to emotion such as 'this type of argument uses emotion in place of reason in order to attempt to win the argument. It is a type of manipulation, attempting to arouse the emotions of its audience in order to gain acceptance of its conclusion'. It is fallacious because: ♦ It is inferred that we should not kill whales because of their size, age and the use of the emotionally-charged term 'majestic'. **(1 mark)** ♦ The emotions felt by the reader about the whales is not relevant to whether we should be able to kill whales. **(1 mark)** ♦ There may well be other reasons for not killing whales but size, age and this sort of emotional appeal are not relevant reasons. **(1 mark)**

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Inappropriate, poor analogies: explaining how pertinent differences between the things used in the analogy serve to undermine the analogical reasoning	Read the following argument. Working several hours a day in a clothes factory is no different from having a paper round. There's nothing morally wrong about letting 13-year-old kids have a paper round. So, there's nothing morally wrong about letting 13-year-old kids work several hours a day in a clothes factory. Do you find the analogical reasoning in this argument convincing?	3	Candidates are expected to say that the analogical reasoning in this argument is not convincing. Candidates can gain marks for the following: ♦ Working conditions in a clothes factory will be very different from the working conditions of a paper round so this is a weak analogy. **(1 mark)** ♦ Children working in clothes factories tend to be exploited or are often forced to work there, whereas children doing a paper round are more likely to have chosen to do so. **(1 mark)** ♦ It might well be the case that there's nothing morally wrong about letting children have a paper round, but we cannot, from that, draw the conclusion that there's nothing morally wrong about letting children work in a clothes factory. **(1 mark)**
Conductive strength	Explain what a conductive argument is. Why might conductive reasoning be important in a court of law?	2 2	Candidates are expected to give an explanation of conductive arguments. In a conductive argument, although the premises are assessed individually with regard to acceptability and relevance, **(1 mark)** they are considered together with regard to sufficiency. **(1 mark)** The addition of premises strengthens a conductive argument, and the removal of premises weakens an argument. **(1 mark)** In the case of a court of law the legal case would be strengthened if there were several distinct reasons to believe that an offence has been committed. The legal case would be supported convergently. **(1 mark)**

Knowledge and doubt model questions

Area of course content	Question	Mark	Marking instructions
Descartes: method of doubt	Why did Descartes feel it was necessary to demolish everything completely and start again from the foundations?	3	Candidates should refer closely to Descartes' text in their answer. Candidates can gain marks for the following: ♦ He was struck by the number of falsehoods that he had accepted as true in his childhood. **(1 mark)** ♦ He was unhappy with the foundation of knowledge he had built, using these falsehoods. **(1 mark)** ♦ He wanted to establish certainty in the sciences. **(1 mark)**
Descartes: the deceiving God argument	Descartes' deceiving God argument and his malicious demon hypothesis are sometimes confused by people who read Descartes' Meditations. Explain the differences between the two.	6	Candidates should refer closely to Descartes' text in their answer. Candidates can gain 3 marks for accurate description of the deceiving God argument and 3 marks for accurate description of the malicious demon hypothesis. They are expected to make comments such as: ♦ Descartes suggests that an omnipotent God might have arranged things such that everything about the external world is an illusion. **(1 mark)** ♦ The deceiving God might have made it that the truths of mathematics are not what they seem to be. **(1 mark)** ♦ Descartes dismisses the objection that a supremely good God would not allow the meditator to be deceived in such a way. **(1 mark)** ♦ The malicious demon hypothesis is not an argument but a thought experiment, designed to prevent Descartes' habitual opinions from returning. **(1 mark)** ♦ Descartes proposes to 'deceive himself' by pretending for a while that his previous beliefs are not just subject to doubt but are actually false. **(1 mark)** ♦ To achieve this, he suggests the possible existence of a malicious demon that has used all its energies in order to deceive him. **(1 mark)**

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Descartes: the cogito	One criticism of the cogito is that Descartes could just as easily have referred to other actions besides thinking — for example, running. How do you think Descartes would respond to that criticism?	4	Candidates should gain marks for the following points: Descartes would claim that this criticism is missing the point of the argument. **(1 mark)** This is because running and all other activities, other than thinking, depend on the existence of a physical body **(1 mark)** which, at this point in the Meditations, is still open to doubt. **(1 mark)** Thinking is a mental event in the mind so Descartes cannot doubt that he thinks because doubting is a form of thinking. **(1 mark)** If he were to doubt that he exists, that would prove he does exist — as something that thinks must exist. The cogito is a self-authenticating statement in a way that no statement that refers to physical events could be. **(1 mark)**
Descartes: the idea of God	Why does Descartes say in Meditation III that the idea of God must be innate?	4	Candidates should refer closely to Descartes' text in their answer. Descartes says that the idea of God cannot have come from him (Descartes) because he is a finite substance **(1 mark)**, and God is an infinite substance. **(1 mark)** He states that the idea of God was not acquired through the senses **(1 mark)** or invented by him (Descartes) so therefore it must be innate. **(1 mark)**

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Hume: the copy principle	Briefly explain Hume's copy principle. Identify the two arguments he uses to support the copy principle.	4	Candidates should refer closely to Hume's text in their answer. All our ideas or more feeble perceptions are copies of our impressions or more lively perceptions. **(1 mark)** Complex thoughts are made up of simple ideas, copied from earlier feelings or sensations. **(1 mark)** Hume's two arguments to support the copy principle are: ♦ 1: the description of God as a complex idea **(1 mark)** ♦ 2: the claim that, when the relevant impression has been denied through malfunctioning senses or the absence of relevant experiences or absence due to species limitations, the person will not possess the corresponding idea. **(1 mark)**
Hume: the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact	Give an example of knowledge that falls into the category 'relations of ideas' and an example of knowledge that falls into the category 'matters of fact'.	2	Candidates should gain 1 mark for each correct example. For example: ♦ relations of ideas: all triangles have three sides **(1 mark)** ♦ matters of fact: it is raining today **(1 mark)**
Hume: missing shade of blue	Why does Hume claim that the counter example of the missing shade of blue is insufficient reason to amend the general principle behind the copy principle?	3	Candidates should refer closely to Hume's text in their answer. 'Hume points out that the person would only be able to do this had he been acquainted with other shades of blue **(1 mark)** and so the idea would still be based on impressions albeit not a corresponding impression.' **(1 mark)** Hume further says that the example is so singular that it is hardly worth noticing. **(1 mark)** The counter example on its own is not a good enough reason to alter our general maxim. **(1 mark)**

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Hume: example of Adam	Hume uses the example of Adam in section IV part 1 to illustrate his view that knowledge about causes is never known a priori but from our experience of finding that particular objects are constantly conjoined with one another. Explain how he does this.	3	Candidates should refer closely to Hume's text in their answer. According to myth, Adam is thought to be the first man on earth — he therefore did not have the experiences of others to draw on. **(1 mark)** Hume makes the point that, even if Adam's reasoning abilities were perfect from the start, **(1 mark)** he could not have inferred from the fluidity and transparency of water that it could have drowned him or from the light and heat of fire that it could burn him **(1 mark)**. Adam would have to experience the effect of water on breathing to know that it could cause him to drown **(1 mark)**.
Hume: examples of billiard balls and stones	State the purpose of Hume's example of billiard balls.	1	The purpose of Hume's examples of billiard balls and stones is to support his claim that an effect cannot be determined a priori. **(1 mark)**
Hume: examples of bread and coal	Hume said: 'If we are given some stuff with the colour and consistency of bread that we have eaten in the past, we don't hesitate to repeat the experiment of eating it, confidently expecting it to nourish and support us. That is what we do every morning at the breakfast table: confidently experimenting with bread-like stuff by eating it!'	4	Candidates should refer closely to Hume's text in their answer. To gain 4 marks, candidates should give a clear explanation of Hume's process of thought. Hume states that: ♦ He has found that such and such an object (in this case, the bread) has always had such and such an effect. **(1 mark)** ♦ He foresees that other objects (the bread on the kitchen table) that appear similar will have similar effects. **(1 mark)** He claims that confidently expecting the bread to continue to be nourishing is not based on our reasoning. **(1 mark)** When we become sure of what will result from a particular event, it is only because we have experienced many events of that kind, all with the same effect. **(1 mark)**

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	According to Hume, what is the basis for this process of thought?		Candidates should gain marks for appropriate reference to: ♦ constant conjunction ♦ we cannot make a causal inference using a priori reasoning ♦ the principle of ‘custom’ or ‘habit’

Moral philosophy model questions

Area of course content	Question	Mark	Marking instructions
Utilitarianism: Bentham's hedonic calculus	Critics sometimes say that it is impossible to carry out detailed calculations every single time you face a moral problem. What would Bentham say to that criticism?	2	Bentham would say that it is not always necessary to go through such complicated calculations because sometimes it is obvious how to act to produce the best outcome. **(1 mark)** We do not have to calculate constantly — sometimes we just have to use our common sense when we are making a moral decision. **(1 mark)** We will become familiar with which actions will produce the most happiness based on past calculations and experience. **(1 mark)**
Utilitarianism: Mill's higher and lower pleasures	Mill stated: 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.' What did Mill mean by that statement?	3	Mill meant that some pleasures that people experience are higher kinds of pleasure. **(1 mark)** Mill argues that quality of pleasure is as important as quantity. **(1 mark)** A human being can experience intellectual pleasures that are superior in quality to the lower pleasures experienced by animals. **(1 mark)** Mill argues that people who have experienced higher and lower pleasures prefer higher pleasures. **(1 mark)** Mill believed that, faced with the choice, no one who had experienced both types of pleasure would choose to live a life without some higher pleasures **(1 mark)**, even if they were to have a life full of lower ones **(1 mark)**. Candidates can gain marks for 'competent judges', if defined correctly.

Area of course content	Question	Mark	Marking instructions
Kant's moral theory: duty versus inclination	To what extent would Kant claim that all inclination is bad, when it comes to acting morally?	4	Candidates are expected to understand that Kant does not say that all inclination is bad. Kant states that: ♦ all actions done only from inclination without any motive of duty have no moral worth **(1 mark)** ♦ actions done solely from the motive of duty, without any inclination, have moral worth **(1 mark)** Kant would also say that, as long as the motive of duty is the overriding principle **(1 mark)**, the presence of inclination does not take away from the morality of the act. **(1 mark)**
Kant's moral theory: distinction between perfect and imperfect duties	According to Kant, why is stealing morally wrong?	4	To gain 4 marks, candidates should accurately describe the process of the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative states: 'Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.' **(1 mark)** If I will an act of stealing to be a universal law, then anyone could steal whenever they wanted. **(1 mark)** The concept of stealing then becomes illogical because you cannot steal something from someone if there is no concept of owning possessions. **(1 mark)** Therefore, any maxim willing an act of stealing to become a universal law leads to a 'contradiction in conception'. **(1 mark)** Candidates can also gain marks for explaining that not only does the act of stealing fail the first formulation of Kant's categorical imperative, but it also fails the second formulation. For example, you are using the person you are stealing from 'simply as a means to your own end' of obtaining property that does not belong to you **(1 mark)**. This is wrong because it takes away the person's right to aim for their own goals or ends **(1 mark)** and undermines their autonomy because they do not get to choose whether they wish to give you the property or keep it for themselves **(1 mark)**. Kant thinks we have perfect duties not to do anything that treats people as 'simply a means to your own ends' and imperfect duties to support people in achieving their goals **(1 mark)**.

Administrative information

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History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
1.1	Previously published on Understanding Standards website as a resource for session 2021–22. Style updated for publication on subject page.	February 2024

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