



# **National 5 Philosophy: guidance on creating assessments**

The information in this publication may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from [permissions@sqa.org.uk](mailto:permissions@sqa.org.uk).

This edition: February 2024 (version 1.0)

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2024

# Contents

<b>Introduction and purpose</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What are prelims?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Understanding course assessment requirements and standards</b>	<b>3</b>
Conditions of assessment	3
Level of demand	3
Timing (when assessment is carried out)	3
Assessment requirements and the structure of the question paper	4
<b>Creating an assessment</b>	<b>5</b>
Course coverage	5
Constructing a question	6
Short-answer questions	6
Marking reliability	9
<b>Checklist for prelim writing</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Administrative information</b>	<b>12</b>
History of changes	12

## Introduction and purpose

This document provides guidance to help teachers and lecturers delivering National 5 Philosophy to prepare assessments for their learners. You should read this guidance alongside SQA's [National Courses: guidance on evidence for estimates](#). You should also refer to the course specification and course support effective for the current year, which you can find on the [National 5 Philosophy subject page](#) on SQA's website.

Assessments can have several purposes, but they will most likely be used as:

- ◆ diagnostic information, which helps to inform teaching and learning
- ◆ predictive information, which helps in decisions on course estimates
- ◆ practice for candidates in an external assessment context
- ◆ evidence for exceptional circumstances, should it be needed

Where evidence is used for predictive purposes or as evidence for exceptional circumstances, it is important that the assessments used are as close to the structure and format of the final exam as possible. This document provides guidance on how to meet these criteria; however, different forms of assessment may be appropriate for other purposes.

## What are prelims?

A prelim or mock exam is carried out under the same conditions as the final exam. It should be clearly aligned to the course specification, content, and level of demand as exemplified in the [specimen question paper and past papers](#). Because specimen question papers and past papers are in the public domain and candidates can readily access them, you should not use them in their entirety. However, you can incorporate individual questions from past papers into prelims or mock question papers. Alternatively, you can create your own questions.

# Understanding course assessment requirements and standards

## Conditions of assessment

Whatever purpose assessments have, it is likely that the closer you align centre-created assessments with SQA exams, the better value they will be. This means that assessments should:

- ◆ be closed book (without notes) and timed whenever possible
- ◆ give a length of time to answer questions that corresponds to the time allowed for the National 5 Philosophy question paper. In the National 5 final exam there are 1.75 minutes allocated per mark

## Level of demand

When creating assessments, you should consider the level of demand of the question paper. In an assessment that replicates the difficulty of the final exam, approximately 30% of the marks should be A-type, 20% B-type and 50% C-type. Assessments that are completed in one sitting and cover all three sections of the course (arguments in action, knowledge and doubt and moral philosophy) will be considered more demanding than an assessment that only covers one area or one that is completed over several sittings (all other things being equal).

## Timing (when assessment is carried out)

If you carry out assessments early in the course of study, they are likely to be of less use in terms of exam preparation or generating evidence of likely success than evidence that you gather later. However, carrying out assessments early in the course helps to consolidate learning of key concepts and inform learning and teaching more generally. If you use early assessments, further evidence from assessments later in the academic year may demonstrate a candidate's progression and be more useful in building a profile and preparing for the final exam. Assessments carried out straight after learning a section of the course and only covering that section are less likely to be a good indicator of future success.

## Assessment requirements and the structure of the question paper

Detailed information on the structure of the question paper and the knowledge, understanding and skills required can be found in the [course specification](#). A summary of the National 5 Philosophy question paper is shown below.

### Final exam: 80 marks — 2 hours 20 minutes to complete

Section	Summary
Section 1: arguments in action — 20 marks	The questions have a mark range of 1 to 10 marks and sample across this area of study.
Section 2: knowledge and doubt — 30 marks	The questions have a mark range of 1 to 10 marks and sample across this area of study.
Section 3: moral philosophy — 30 marks	The questions have a mark range of 1 to 10 marks and sample across this area of study.

## Creating an assessment

Centre-created assessments that closely replicate those used by SQA are most likely to prepare candidates well for the final exam. In addition, the evidence they produce will be more reliable for the purposes of producing estimates and for supporting grades under exceptional circumstances.

To produce an assessment, you should consider several elements.

### Course coverage

You can ask about any part of the course content in the exam, but only a sample of the course is assessed in any question paper. Centre-created assessments and prelim question papers should aim to replicate this by sampling from across the course.

Ideally, a prelim paper should avoid questions that invite candidates to use the same material when answering different questions. In the extract shown below, each part of question 1 relates to the knowledge, understanding and skills around arguments in philosophy, but each part asks for a different piece of knowledge or requires candidates to demonstrate a different skill.

An extract from a question paper:

1. (a) State the conclusion in each of the following arguments.	4
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;">Exercise is good for your physical and mental health. Exercise boosts energy and improves mood. Research has shown that exercise has a beneficial effect on the human body.</div> <hr style="width: 80%; margin: 10px auto;"/>	
(b) Give an example of an argument.	1
<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 10px auto;"/>	

1. (continued)

(c) Read the following conversation.



(i) Explain why this is not an argument in the philosophical sense.

3

## Constructing a question

When constructing your own questions for assessment purposes, you should consider the following:

- ◆ Questions should only ask about content from within the course.
- ◆ The number of marks available for a question should be achievable: for example, if there are 3 marks available, then it must be possible to make either 3 distinct points in response to the question asked or to develop a point worth up to 3 marks.
- ◆ Questions should sample different content and different skills from across the course.

A helpful document for this process is the [National 5 Philosophy model questions](#) which features a range of questions and marking instructions for illustrative purposes. In addition, the [types of questions](#) found in Appendix 2 of the course specification may be useful.

## Short-answer questions

As noted previously, it is acceptable to select questions from different past papers and specimen question papers to create a valid prelim assessment. In addition, one way that you can create your own assessment questions is by using the question stem from past paper and specimen paper questions as a basis for new questions. For example, you could easily adapt the following question in the specimen paper:



**1. (b) (continued)**

(ii) Put the following argument into standard form.

**3**

Don't you know that people have been looking for the Loch Ness monster since 1933. In all this time they have not found any conclusive evidence that there is a Loch Ness monster. The Loch Ness monster is a hoax.

---

It is possible to create a novel question using question 1. (b) as a basis. Take the question stem: 'Put the following argument into standard form' and a new question can be created by inserting a novel argument. When doing this, it is important to keep the challenge of the argument included at a similar level, or to change the marks accordingly.

In the argument in question 1. (b) ii, to gain full marks for the question, candidates must 'tidy up' the first premise of the argument to a meaningful standalone statement. See the marking instructions below:

<b>3</b>	<p><b>Premise 1</b> People have been looking for the Loch Ness monster since 1933.</p> <p><b>Premise 2</b> In all this time people have not found any conclusive evidence that there is a Loch Ness monster.</p> <p><b>Conclusion,</b> the Loch Ness monster is a hoax.</p> <p>Do not award a mark if premise 1 is written as, "Don't you know that people have been looking for the Loch Ness monster since 1933."</p>
----------	---

If the premises didn't require any rewording, then the argument would be more straightforward to put into standard form, and you should adjust the marks available to reflect this.

As mentioned previously, it is important that the questions in an assessment have varying levels of challenge. You can sometimes change the level of demand of a question by increasing or decreasing the marks available; however, it is important to make sure that there is enough to be said to collect the marks available. Here are some examples:

3. (continued)

(d) Read the following scenario.

You find a wallet lying in the street. When you open it you realise it belongs to a rich man. You could either return the wallet or keep it.

Use the Hedonic Calculus to show that the right thing to do would be to return the wallet to its owner.

3

You can make this question more challenging by increasing the marks available. It would be possible to consider more of the criteria of the hedonic calculus and apply them to this scenario, and so there are a range of ways candidates could gain more marks. This would require candidates to draw upon more aspects of their knowledge and understanding of the hedonic calculus, which makes it more challenging. Marking instructions would have to be adjusted to account for the increase in challenge, because a deeper level of understanding would be required. Candidates should not, however, get any more marks just for mentioning more factors of the hedonic calculus.

It may be less reasonable to reduce the marks available for this question because candidates would struggle to make a case for returning the wallet without mentioning at least a few points in relation to this situation, and so they would need to say more than they would be given credit for.

On the other hand, it would not be appropriate to change the mark range of the following question:

(e) According to Mill, what is the difference between higher and lower pleasures?

Give examples to support your answer.

4

An answer would be complete with four points made and no more nor less would be appropriate. This can be seen in the marking instructions:

This question requires the candidates to identify and then explain higher and lower pleasures.	4	<b>Higher pleasures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• higher pleasures appeal to higher faculties (1 mark)</li><li>• examples are literature, art or music. (1 mark)</li></ul> <b>Lower pleasures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lower pleasures are animalistic (1 mark)</li><li>• examples are food, drink and sex. (1 mark)</li></ul>
--	---	---

It would be possible to remove the need for examples in this question and then reduce the marks available to 2, however it wouldn't be appropriate to ask for more examples to increase the marks available, as this is repeating the same philosophical knowledge and understanding.

### **Writing inclusive questions**

The best way to make sure you do this is to use the wording of the [course content](#) section of the course specification. The wording of the course specification should be familiar to candidates, and using it will help them to decode the question more quickly and focus on their response.

Furthermore, you should follow the guidelines below:

- ◆ Write questions that are clear, precise, and easy to understand. Apart from appropriate philosophical terminology, avoid using jargon or difficult language.
- ◆ Use terminology that is familiar to all candidates.
- ◆ Consider the impact of cultural and linguistic issues when writing questions.
- ◆ When constructing scenarios or arguments, avoid stereotyping. For example, think about using a female name when creating a scenario that includes a stereotypical male role or occupation, and vice versa. Or use gender-neutral names.
- ◆ Use names that reflect the cultural diversity of the community of your centre, and of Scotland.
- ◆ As much as possible, try to make questions concise and easy to read.

### **Marking reliability**

You should be familiar with the general marking principles for National 5 Philosophy and the published marking instructions that accompany SQA past papers, as these demonstrate the required marking standard.

It is good practice to prepare the marking instructions at the same time as you construct the assessment. You can then refine marking instructions considering candidate responses. They should be agreed between all markers and applied consistently. Cross-marking of a sample of each marker's work should occur to ensure the marking instructions have been applied accurately and consistently.

Some common marking issues include:

- ◆ inconsistent application of the marking instructions
- ◆ markers being over-lenient or too harsh
- ◆ marks being awarded to candidates for doing the same thing more than once (for example an explanation of different complex ideas)
- ◆ candidates being awarded marks despite the fact they have not given sufficient detail to answer the question

In addition, you should only allocate marks based on the written response and not on what the response infers.

## Checklist for prelim writing

Yes or No	Checklist
	Contains questions drawn from at least three past papers or specimen question papers (if using).
	Approximately 30% of marks are A-type, 20% are B-type, 50% are C-type.
	Each question assesses only what is listed in the course specification.
	Paper structure, format, and language mirrors that of an SQA question paper.
	Questions, scenarios and arguments are inclusive.

# Administrative information

---

**Published:** February 2024 (version 1.0)

---

## History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check SQA's website to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.