# Philosophy Stage 2 Subject Assessment Advice

## Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the previous year’s assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

# School Assessment

## Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis

Students apply their knowledge of reasoning and argument in identifying and analysing the arguments of others. They provide evidence and reasons to support or refute counter arguments. For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* reasoning and argument
* critical analysis
* communication

The more successful responses commonly:

* included the context and purpose of the arguments to be analysed
* included the Standard Form of the argument/s that were to be analysed in detail.
* used accurate argument analysis terminology
* used the appropriate argument analysis terminology depending on whether the argument being analysed required the terminology for deductive arguments or inductive arguments.
* showed a perceptive approach to critical analysis by going beyond labelling the parts of the argument being discussed.

The less successful responses commonly

* inaccurate use of the argument analysis term sound. This term should be used in relation to Deductive arguments. It requires two criteria to be present – valid form (eg classic successful deductive pattern) and true premises.
* inaccurate use of the term cogent which is a term used for Inductive arguments. This term also has two criteria: True premises and strong (ie premises have a strong link to the conclusion)
* omitted to explore whether a premise could be considered true or not. This is important to establish as it has such an impact on being able to apply the terms sound or cogent. This analysis also feeds into the student’s ability to generate marks in the critical analysis section of the perceptive analysis performance standards
* discussed the whole text in general terms rather than analysing one to three arguments more thoroughly.

## Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Students undertake three issues analysis assessments, one for each of the key areas of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Students identify:

* + - why the chosen issue is a philosophical issue
    - different responses to the philosophical issue.
* what position they will take in response to the philosophical issue
* a justifiable defence for the position they have taken
* how they will communicate this position to others.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning and argument
* communication

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated depth and breadth of analysis
* analysed issues from the point of view of a number of different philosophers or positions. This allowed students to demonstrate evidence of their knowledge and understanding more effectively
* demonstrated evidence of their learning in the reasoning and argument criterion, particularly “Coherent and convincing formulation and defence of positions taken”, by taking and defending a position of their own, as a consequence of consideration and analysis of the issue from the positions of a number of philosophers.

The less successful responses commonly:

* gave a descriptive account of one philosopher’s position, without comparing the position with other philosophers’ positions
* did not formulate and defend the student’s own position at all
* did not formulate and defend their position in relation to the philosopher’s perspectives covered in the essay.

# External Assessment

## Assessment Type 3: Issues Study

Students undertake one issues study.

They examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas, choosing the issue in negotiation with their teacher. Students consider the following questions:

* + why is it a philosophical issue?
  + what positions do various philosophers hold on the issue?
  + what are the philosophers’ reasons for holding these positions?
  + what objections or counter examples are relevant to these positions?
  + what is the student’s own position, and why?

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* + knowledge and understanding
  + reasoning and argument
  + critical analysis
  + communication

The more successful responses commonly:

* made sure that the topic question allowed the student to formulate his or her own view. E.g., Compare A and B doesn’t work as well as to what extent is A better than B. The question: To what extent is [insert ethical topic] ethically justified? Is better for the student than simply having the ethical topic as a heading for the Issues Study
* ensured that the topic question gave scope for the student to explain and analyse a number of philosophical positions and the arguments for and against those positions
* made sure that the topic question provided opportunities for critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions and arguments
* ensured that their topic came from one of the three topic areas of ethics, epistemology or metaphysics, and were not political or aesthetic philosophy topics
* included a range of philosophical positions to demonstrate knowledge and understanding
* clearly expressed the reasons and arguments for the various philosophical positions
* demonstrated depth and breadth of analysis by referring to the arguments of specific philosophers rather than just broad positions. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre’s arguments rather than simply existentialism
* clearly presented and defended the student’s own position on the question
* referenced appropriately and presented a bibliography accurately and correctly.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had a general topic rather than a specific question
* presented a sociological, economic or psychological study and/or approach rather than a philosophical study
* were an investigation into a particular philosopher rather than a probing study of a philosophical issue
* were an attempt to define a branch of philosophy rather than a study of a philosophical issue
* did not present and defend the student’s own position on the question
* the student may have presented their position, however it was quite weak and with no reasoning supplied for their position. It also may not have made any reference to the philosophical perspectives discussed in the essay at all.
* had a chatty or informal writing style which limited opportunities to express sophisticated reasoning, argument and critical analysis
* gave irrelevant biographical detail and philosophers’ achievements and writings
* did not closely adhere to the requirements of the assessment type in the subject outline.