2023 Philosophy Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2023 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.

Across the Assessment Types for this subject, students can present their responses in oral or multimodal form, where 6 minutes is the equivalent of 1000 words. Students should not speed-up the recording of their videos excessively in an attempt to condense more content into the maximum time limit.

If a video is flagged by markers/moderators as impacted by speed, schools will be requested to provide a transcript and markers/moderators will be advised to mark/moderate based on the evidence in the transcript, only considering evidence up to the maximum word limit (e.g. up to 2000 words for AT3).

If the speed of the recording makes the speech incomprehensible, it affects the accuracy of transcriptions and it also impacts the ability of markers/moderators to find evidence of student achievement against the performance standards.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis (25%)

Students complete two Argument Analysis tasks. Each task is to consider a different type of text. 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.

The more successful responses commonly:

* clearly outlined arguments in standard form
* clearly explained terminology
* used accurate terminology. For example, the terms *valid* and *sound* were used accurately in relation to deductive arguments, and inductive arguments were analysed using the correct terminology used for inductive arguments e.g. *cogent* and *strong/weak*
* analysed the argument methodically
* discussion of premises showed good critical analysis skills e.g. the veracity of the premise was analysed
* selected texts from popular media, per subject outline, containing identifiable arguments
* were based on the student’s original critical thinking, rather than tertiary analysis of others’ views of the chosen text
* explained esoteric terminology or concepts in the student’s own words
* avoided discussing the context of the text too much, and only provided the required background
* followed one referencing convention consistently
* provided a comprehensive and accurate bibliography.

The less successful responses commonly:

* neglected to specifically define or address an argument within the text and did not identify and present an argument in standard form
* provided a recount of narrative either as a preamble or throughout the response
* were eclectic rather than methodically organised, making the student’s analysis difficult to follow
* argument terminology was inaccurately used. E.g. valid, sound
* overlooked one or more assessment features, or focussed on irrelevant assessment design criteria for this assessment type
* relied on critics' analysis of famous philosophical arguments from secondary sources
* focused largely on technical explanation of argument types (i.e. deductive, inductive) unconnected to the argument in question
* used a text as a starting point to discuss a broad philosophical issue from one of the key areas rather than defining and analysing an argument
* analysed narrative elements without relating them to the argument. For example symbolism, sound, images, irony, or analogy.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis (45%)

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

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated knowledge and understanding of various philosophical positions and why those positions were held.
* clearly defined the philosophical issue or question and strictly adhered to this in the subsequent discussion
* critically analysed the strengths and weaknesses of various philosophical positions.
* demonstrated originality of thought
* explained esoteric terminology or concepts in the student’s own words
* briefly contextualised the philosophers they referenced, without incorporating lengthy, extraneous biographical material
* were sufficiently conversant with philosophers’ positions to discuss them primarily in their own words
* incorporated and acknowledged quotations judiciously to support student’s argument
* included specific discussion of philosophers’ reasoning
* assumed and defended a philosophical position, which followed logically from their interrogation of the issue
* used examples to illustrate complex concepts
* acknowledged quotations and paraphrasing, using accurate, consistent citation
* included a comprehensive bibliography.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not specifically define an issue or question
* broadly discussed textual material
* did not format task in a structured way, making argument difficult to follow
* focused on addressing specific features in Knowledge and Understanding assessment design criteria at the expense of other specific features
* mostly consisted of cut and pasted materials from other sources
* focussed too much on biographical details
* included only one philosopher’s perspective
* were poorly edited, misspelling names and terminology
* did not appropriately acknowledge sources by including citations or a bibliography.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Issues Study (30%)

Students undertake one issues study. They examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas, choosing the issue in negotiation with their teacher.

The more successful responses commonly:

* made sure that the topic question allowed the student to formulate their own view. E.g. “Compare A and B” doesn’t work as well as “to what extent is A better than B” or “To what extent is … justified?”
* 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
* 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
* discussed both strengths and weaknesses of arguments and philosophical positions to demonstrate successful critical analysis
* referenced appropriately and presented a bibliography accurately and correctly.

The less successful responses commonly:

* had a general topic rather than a specific question
* summarised broad philosophical concepts (e.g. Buddhism, stoicism, libertarianism) rather than showing knowledge and understanding of specific philosophers
* 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
* had limited original critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical perspectives
* did not present and defend the student’s own position on a question
* presented a very brief personal viewpoint or presented a viewpoint that was not well supported by good reasons that related to the philosophical positions discussed within the essay
* 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
* presented a sociological, economic or psychological study and/or approach rather than a philosophical study
* did not closely adhere to the requirements of the assessment type in the subject outline.