Diploma Programme
Programme du diplôme
Programa del Diploma

Markscheme

May 2025

Philosophy

Higher level and standard level

Paper 1

21 pages

How to use the Diploma Programme Philosophy markscheme

The assessment markbands constitute the formal tool for marking examination scripts, and in these assessment markbands examiners can see the skills being assessed in the examinations. The markschemes are designed to assist examiners in possible routes taken by students in terms of the content of their answers when demonstrating their skills of doing philosophy through their responses. The points listed are not compulsory points, and not necessarily the best possible points. They are a framework to help examiners contextualize the requirements of the question, and to facilitate the application of marks according to the assessment markbands listed on page 4 for the core theme and page 7 for the optional themes.

It is important that examiners understand that the main idea of the course is to promote *doing* philosophy, and this involves activity and engagement throughout a two-year programme, as opposed to emphasizing the chance to display knowledge in a terminal set of examination papers. Even in the examinations, responses should not be assessed on how much students *know* as much as how they are able to use their knowledge in support of an argument, using the skills referred to in the various assessment markbands published in the subject guide, reflecting an engagement with philosophical activity throughout the course. As a tool intended to help examiners in assessing responses, the following points should be kept in mind when using a markscheme:

- The Diploma Programme Philosophy course is designed to encourage the skills of *doing* philosophy in the students. These skills can be accessed through reading the assessment markbands in the subject guide
- The markscheme does not intend to outline a model/correct answer
- The markscheme has an introductory paragraph which contextualizes the emphasis of the question being asked
- The bullet points below the paragraph are suggested possible points of development that should *not* be considered a prescriptive list but rather an indicative list where they might appear in the answer
- If there are names of philosophers and references to their work incorporated into the markscheme, this should help to give context for the examiners and does *not* reflect a requirement that such philosophers and references should appear in an answer: They are possible lines of development.
- Students can legitimately select from a wide range of ideas, arguments and concepts in service of the question they are answering, and it is possible that students will use material effectively that is *not* mentioned in the markscheme
- Examiners should be aware of the command terms for Philosophy as published in the Philosophy subject guide when assessing responses
- In Paper 1, examiners must be aware that a variety of types of answers and approaches, as well as a freedom to choose a variety of themes, is expected. Thus, examiners should not penalize different styles of answers or different selections of content when students develop their response to the questions. The markscheme should not imply that a uniform response is expected
- In markschemes for the core theme questions in Paper 1 (section A) the bullet points suggest possible routes of response to the stimulus, but it is critical for examiners to understand that the selection of the philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is *entirely at the choice of the student* so it is possible for material to gain credit from the examiner even if none of the material features in the markscheme.

Note to examiners

Students at both Higher Level and Standard Level answer **one** question on the core theme (Section A). Students at Higher Level answer **two** questions on the optional themes (Section B), each based on a different optional theme.

Students at Standard Level answer **one** question on the optional themes (Section B).

Paper 1 section A core theme markbands

This task presents students with an unseen stimulus in the form of either a short text extract or an image. Students are required to explore a philosophical issue related to what it is to be human, the focus of the core theme, that arises from this stimulus. Within their critical exploration of their chosen issue, students are required to make explicit reference both to the stimulus and to their wider knowledge from their study of the core theme.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	• A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is implied but not explicitly identified. There is minimal explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Few, if any, references to the stimulus are made in the response. • The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. • The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	• A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is identified but is imprecisely or vaguely stated. There is some limited explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Occasional references to the stimulus are made in the response. • The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the core theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. • The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	• A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is a basic explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made during the response, although these are sometimes ineffective or unclear. • The response contains some relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and a lack of clarity in places. • The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	• A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is good explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. • The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. • The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	• A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is clearly and explicitly identified. There is a well-developed explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Clear, effective and specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. • The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. • The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Section A

Core theme: Being human

1. Excerpt from *Egyptian: Osiris and Isis*, from a collection entitled Orpheus: Myths of the World

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, explore a philosophical issue related to the question of what it is to be human. [25]

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that students might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

The stimulus consists of a part of the narrative of the Osiris myth, which presents the human condition under his reign and some of its fundamental institutions, such as technology and the arts, law, and religiosity.

The stimulus may prompt discussions of issues related to the concepts of human nature and human identity, individuality and universality, the nature versus nurture debate, personal identity and cultural identity, and the possible metaphysical status of human beings.

The stimulus may also prompt discussions of freedom, freedom and determinism, compatibilism (e.g. Dennett) and incompatibilism (e.g. Van Inwagen), the self and the other, the individuals and communities, and the social condition of human being and its opposites (e.g. Hobbes and Rousseau).

Students might explore:

- What does it mean to be human?
- Do humans have common characteristics that are independent of the influence of culture?
- Human nature as finite and flawed *versus* human nature as perfectible
- Is reason the defining characteristic of human beings?
- Reason and emotion
- The contrasting roles of reason (e.g. Descartes and Hume)
- Is reason a special characteristic that distinguishes humans from machines or other animals?
- Human nature and technology
- The arts as a form of human activity
- The technological enhancement of human beings; dimensions of striving for perfection
- Bostrom and transhumanism
- Being interested in the future as a fundamental characteristic of being human (e.g. Heidegger and Sartre)
- Meaning of life, hope of immortality and religiosity (e.g. Frankl and Buber).

2. Image

With explicit reference to the stimulus and your own knowledge, explore a philosophical issue related to the question of what it is to be human. [25]

The following paragraphs provide only a framework to help examiners in their assessment of responses to this question. Examiners should be responsive to a variety of philosophical perspectives and approaches. Examiners should be aware that students might respond to this passage in a variety of ways including ones not mentioned in the summary below.

The stimulus consists of an image of the face of a woman and the face of a robot facing each other. The stimulus may prompt discussions of issues related to a wide range of concepts, including self and other, self and non-self, solipsism and intersubjectivity, relations to others, identity, personal identity, identity over time, the boundaries between human and machine, personhood, self-knowledge and personhood, self-consciousness and human nature, the social dimension of human nature, human nature and technology, human-machine interaction, and the problem of other minds.

The stimulus may also prompt discussions of the diversity of approaches to the concept of "self", the Buddhist notion of *anattā* or "not-self", de Beauvoir's rejection of the concept of a solipsistic isolated self, Freud and the psychoanalytical conception of the human mind, the relational self (e.g. Confucius), transcendental ego (Kant), neuroscientific views of selfhood, biological, social, psychological and spiritual relations of the self to others, the role of emotions in the formation of the self, mind and body and how the mind and body interact, and the contrasting views between materialism/physicalism and dualism.

Students might explore:

- The extent to which I am what I see as a reflection of myself
- Self-perception and knowledge, e.g. Descartes's *cogito*
- The relation to the others as constitutive of human identity
- Memory and self-perception
- Different explorations in psychology and social sciences concerning the development and configuration of our self-image
- How would it be possible to integrate different notions of self?
- The extent to which the reality of the human self challenges a purely biological explanation of the human condition
- The extent to which the idea of personhood is exclusive to human beings
- Can animals or machines be persons?
- The boundaries between what could be considered human and what is a machine
- Gender and identity
- Could humans be raised and educated by robots?

Paper 1 section B optional themes markbands

This task requires students to write a thematic essay on the optional theme they have studied (SL) or two optional themes they have studied (HL). Students are presented with a choice of two questions per theme, with each question relating to one of the points of "required content" specified for that theme. Students are required to undertake a critical and explicitly philosophical discussion of the question posed, selecting and using specific examples drawn from their study of the optional theme to support their points.

Mark	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	• There is minimal focus on the question. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. • The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. • The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	• There is some focus on the question, although the specific demands of the question may only be partially addressed. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. • The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the optional theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. • The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are frequently ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	• The response is focused on the question. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and lack of clarity in places. • The response contains some relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. • The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	• The response is focused on the question, showing engagement with the specific demands of the question. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. • The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. • The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	• There is a sustained focus on the question, showing clear engagement with the specific demands of the question. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. • The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. • The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Section B

Optional theme 1: Aesthetics

3. Evaluate the claim that beauty is not a quality of things themselves. [25]

The claim stems from Hume's famous statement, as it was written in his paper *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757). The claim is grounded in the conception of beauty and taste as subjective judgments. Hence, beauty is not an entity that can be embodied in the things we can define as beautiful. As such, beauty is the result of a judgment that the subject produces on the object that affects his/her perception. Students might explore Locke's and Hume's theories of primary and secondary qualities: there are qualities which pertain to the objects—such as size, weight—and qualities that are projections of the observer's mind, such as temperature, colour. Students might also refer to the wider "pathetic fallacy", as defined by Ruskin, particularly with reference to specific works of art, as in poetry. Students might refer to other philosophical fallacies that have been historically discussed, such as in Descartes, e.g. the argument of wax or the dream argument. Responses might focus on the role of senses in shaping human knowledge and explore the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, reality and illusion, rationality, and emotions. Students might consider critical positions with reference to the senses and the fact that they cannot be trusted, as in Descartes or Spinoza, or follow Hume's line on the central role they play for human knowledge. Students might refer to Kant's aesthetic doctrine of space and time or mention his concepts of beauty and taste: according to Kant, the judgment can be derived "only from the reflection of the subject upon its own proper state of pleasure or pain" (Critique of Judgment). On the same line, Shaftesbury, Schopenhauer, Croce, Santayana all connect the judgment of beauty to a personal experience of pleasure. Responses can take into account the idea that beauty can be an objective entity and refer to Plato's view of it. In Aristotle's Poetics, the concept of beauty is linked to a balanced relation between the parts of the objects, leading to the concept of harmony. In similar ways, Moore states that the judgment of beauty is neither in the object, nor in the subject, being the result of a particular connection between them. Students might also consider Nietzsche's view of beauty and the peculiar relationship between rational and emotional elements, e.g. the Apollonian and Dionysian dialectic. Moreover, students might highlight the differences between beauty and the sublime. Responses might discuss more recent contributions to the role that senses, emotions and, generally, subjectivity play in human knowledge, e.g. Damasio, Nussbaum. Beyond the concept of beauty, students might explore whether art is, in general, a subjective or objective experience.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Beauty and art as personal, subjective experiences
- Judgment of beauty and taste, e.g. Kant
- Berkeley's subjective idealism
- Theory of primary and secondary qualities, e.g. Locke, Hume
- Pathetic fallacy, e.g. Ruskin
- Reality and illusion, e.g. Descartes
- Beauty as an objective entity, e.g. Plato
- Beauty as the result of a harmonious relation, e.g. Aristotle, Moore
- Role of subjective mood and personal state
- Beauty as linked to pleasure, e.g. Shaftesbury, Santayana
- Rationality and emotions, e.g. Nietzsche's dialectic of Apollonian and Dionysian
- The role of senses and emotions in producing judgments and shaping human knowledge, e.g. Kant, Damasio, Nussbaum.

4. Evaluate the claim that the authenticity of a work of art is threatened by its mechanical reproduction. [25]

The claim stems from W. Benjamin's work The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935). It invites an exploration on whether and how technical progress has affected the production of art, the role of the artist and the public in the fruition of works of art. Benjamin's viewpoint is grounded in the idea that there is a significant difference between the work of art as it has been produced and all the possible reproductions of it. The specific conditions in which the work of art has been created mark its authenticity and uniqueness (Benjamin uses the term "aura"), whereas the reproduction seems to destroy this quality of art. Students might consider the role of modern forms of art, particularly involved in mechanical reproduction, such as photography, cinema, and music. Responses might focus on the critiques of capitalistic production, e.g. Marx, and specifically refer to how it affected the cultural production, as in the theories of the Frankfurt School, and Adorno in particular. Benjamin himself criticizes technical progress on the account that it threatens genius and creativity. As Picasso once said, "bad artists copy, good artists steal". On the other hand, students might refer to the technical progress as a means to make art more accessible to the public and whether this can affect positively or negatively the work of art. Students might pinpoint the concept of mass and mass culture and refer to possible criticism in terms of mediocrity and vulgarity, such as in Ortega y Gasset's view. Students might highlight the fact that technical progress in making art mechanically reproducible, offers the possibility to share art and explore other meanings and grasp new details beyond the artist's intentions. Students might refer to Plato's and Aristotle's views on *poiesis* in relation with nature: art as creation versus art as imitation (mimesis). Hence, students might also consider Heidegger's view of *poiesis*, which strictly connects art creation and thinking. Responses might focus on the role that the historical context plays in art production and for the genuine understanding of the work of art and the artist's scope, particularly when accessed centuries later: the mechanical reproduction of a work of art frees it from its original context and make it available for every possible usage. Students might mention historical cases of art production and reproduction for political or religious purposes. Students might also explore the role of digital techniques in making *poiesis* available to the public or in reproducing art through common devices, e.g. smartphones, cameras.

In addressing these philosophical issues Students might explore:

- Authenticity of the work of art versus mechanical reproduction, e.g. Benjamin
- Role of the historical context in understanding art creation
- Whether technical progress limits creativity and genius
- Specific forms of art subject to mechanical reproduction, e.g. photography, cinema, music
- Art as *poiesis*, *mimesis*, as in Plato, Aristotle, or Heidegger
- Capitalist production affecting cultural products, e.g. Marx, the Frankfurt School, Adorno
- Positive and negative consequences of mechanical reproduction of works of art
- Mass culture, fruition of art and possible criticisms, e.g. Ortega y Gasset
- Possible usages of art reproduction for political or religious purposes
- Digital techniques and devices and how they affect possible creation of art or its reproduction
- The influence of Warhol on appreciation of reproduction techniques.

Optional theme 2: Epistemology

5. Evaluate the claim that a belief is knowledge if it is true, certain, and obtained by a reliable process. [25]

The question provides the opportunity for an explanation and evaluation of the claim. It provides an opportunity to discuss the central issues of the nature, sources, scope, limits, and problems of knowledge from the perspective of the epistemological approach known as reliabilism. Reliabilism stresses the truth-conduciveness of a belief-forming process, method, or other factors relevant to the construction and justification of knowledge. Reliabilism might be understood broadly referring to theories that accentuate ways of truth-getting or truth-indicating properties. Further, it is also used narrowly to refer to processes of justification. Students might discuss issues arising from direct realism, where the content of the senses is judged to lead to the truth of the object. In very simple, but central, terms reliabilism would sustain that a belief is justified when it is the result of a generally reliable process. Truth-getting and truth-indicating properties might be related to Popper's distinction between context of discovery and context of justification. Some responses might not see the emphasis on reliabilism implicit in the question and might answer it based on other approaches, e.g. Gettier's critique. Further, while reliabilism is a general approach to knowledge, the question allows a discussion of the issues as presented in the syllabus (e.g. what knowledge is and how it is acquired; opinion, belief, and knowledge).

In addressing these philosophical issues Students might explore:

- How do we experience the world around us? Reliabilism, realism and competing approaches, e.g. foundationalism, coherentism—both agree that everyday beliefs fail at providing what is needed for justification and knowledge
- Knowledge as a construction which contradicts or goes beyond mere belief and opinion
- A central thesis of reliabilism: knowledge is true belief arising from a reliable truth-producing mechanism
- What might count as a reliable truth-producing mechanism?
- Ways of truth justification and sources of knowledge, e.g. perception, introspection, reason
- Would sciences as systems of empirical information count as truth-producing mechanism?
- Reliabilism is externalist in the sense that the reliability of the mode of belief formation is not something that one could be expected to establish just on reflection
- Reliabilism as a theory of justification of knowledge. It further might be associated with the idea which comes from Plato that knowledge is noble, and might be related with the ethical concepts of responsibility, praise, and blame
- Reliabilism as opposed to scepticism
- Religious beliefs and their relationship to claims to knowledge
- What do we mean when we use central epistemological concepts, e.g. justification, truth, evidence?
- Popper's distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification
- Gettier's critique
- Comparison and contrast with traditional views according to which knowledge was understood in terms of good reasons or adequate evidence.

6. Discuss the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism. [25]

The question relates to a classic central problem of knowledge as identified in the syllabus (subjectivism and objectivism). It provides an opportunity to explore the scope and limits of the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism. Some responses may explore the possible resolution of the opposition by reflecting on the social dimension of knowledge, for example as a socially shared belief. Given this social dimension of knowledge, the question may also provide an opportunity to discuss issues related to knowledge and power, access to knowledge, and knowledge and technology. The opposition between subjectivism and objectivism is based on the idea that an objective phenomenon exists independently of human consciousness and human beliefs, whereas the subjective is something that exists depending on the consciousness and beliefs of an individual. The intersubjective, in turn, is something that exists within a network of communication linking the subjective consciousness of many individuals. The intersubjective or dialogical approach, arising from human interactions, could lead responses into the realm of holistic views of knowledge as opposed to discrete domains. This could lead to questions about the advantages or otherwise of non-specialization.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The opposition between subjectivism and objectivism and the classical epistemology, e.g. Plato's theory of Forms, Descartes's distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, Kant's distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena*
- Knowledge might well be seen as forms of social cognition, e.g. mental representations shared by, and distributed over, the members of collective wholes
- Like languages and ideologies, the forms of social cognition are first of all socially shared belief systems used by individuals
- The forms of social cognition produce a social construction of reality, a kind of imagined reality in which everyone believes. As long as this shared belief persists, the imagined reality exerts force in the world
- Objective phenomena exist independently of human consciousness and human beliefs, e.g. radioactive emissions occurred long before people discovered them, and they are dangerous even when people do not believe in them
- Intersubjective phenomena exist in a different way from physical phenomena but their impact on the world may still be huge, e.g. law, money, gods, and nations
- Popper's three worlds distinction: physical objects and events, states of consciousness and objective contents of thought
- Forms of sociology of knowledge deal with the empirical variety of knowledge in human societies and with the processes by which any body of knowledge comes to be socially established as reality
- Knowledge and power, access to knowledge, knowledge, and technology
- The role of beliefs, e.g. eschatological perspectives
- The role of institutionality in shaping our knowledge of the world and binding us to the rules of those institutions, e.g. Searle's theory of institutional facts.

Optional theme 3: Ethics

7. Evaluate the view that the right ethical action is the one that brings the best results. [25]

This question invites an exploration of the view that ethical decisions should be considered according to a view that accounts for the results of the action. This is most often discussed by reference to utilitarianism, but it is also possible to look at the teleological framework of virtue theory which takes into account a much broader consideration of the present and future dynamics, and the impact of decision making and habitual action. Sometimes a consideration of results as being ethically relevant is challenged by the view that what is being considered is an empirical weighing of what the 'best' thing might be to do, as opposed to the "right" thing to do, regardless of future consequences, which are impossible to know. Issues arise about the perspective of whose happiness or suffering is being considered in a calculation of results. Another issue is the fundamental objection that in according "right" with results, a false mix of ethical and natural language is being created—the so-called "naturalistic fallacy". Supporters of teleological ethical views espouse the empirical and equitable method of calculating the right ethical action through results that affect the maximum number of people or help promote the conditions by which a good life in the community can be lived. The classical counter to consideration of results is a duty-based system, with reference, usually, to Kant or divine command theories. Here attention is thrown towards the inherent nature of proposed courses of action and whether the motive for such actions can qualify as right. In Kant, any reference to results disqualifies an action from being moral because it ceases to be unconditional and enters a world of qualification and hypothetical speculation. It is possible that responses might refer to attempts to align ethical thinking with modern social or genetic science, using, say, Game Theory as an explanation for motivation to actions that might be described as ethical. Such approaches would need to ascertain in what way they are investigating ethical actions.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Utilitarianism as the approach determining the right action as the one that brings the greatest benefit to the greatest number
- Ideas and definitions of what is "best"
- The problems of calculation with any concentration on results
- The drive for equity in considering results, but what about "special duties"?
- The linkage of what is morally right to a natural feature of the world—either pleasure or flourishing in virtue theory
- *Eudaimonia* in Aristotle's teleological theory
- The naturalistic fallacy
- The counter from deontological theories, e.g. Kant, divine command
- Ideas and definitions of "best"
- The nature of an action and its relation to intention and motive
- Does a concentration on results commit the agent to unreasonable ethical demands?
- Other theories that look at results but provide a non-ethical basis for determining action, e.g. Game Theory, genetics
- The relation between empirical and rational knowledge in determining ethical action
- Pragmatism—if it works it is right—and practical ethics.

8. Evaluate views that attempt to ground moral judgements in natural features of the world. [25]

This question involves an exploration of possible foundations for making moral judgements. On what possible bases can it be said that an action is morally right or wrong? In both classical and Enlightenment times there were attempts to establish the basis of morality—or the good life—in natural features of the world, most famously with Aristotle's virtue theory based on individual flourishing or utilitarianism's appeal to utility—pleasure/happiness as the basis for what constitutes right or wrong action. In appealing to natural features of the world, such theories reject references to divine command, or the structure of the metaphysical world as proposed by Plato and thinkers influenced by him. Such approaches claim an appeal to empirical evidence for moral judgements, but in doing this diminish the claims of uniqueness of moral language, with its inherent motivational element and its sense of "ought" out of the reach of empirical investigation. Hume worked on the nature of moral language dividing language between descriptive/factual terms and prescriptive/'ought' terms. In proposing a natural feature of the world as the basis for a moral judgement, a supporter is accused of committing the naturalistic fallacy, mixing concepts that are incompatible. Moore famously posed the "open question" argument, which attempted to demonstrate how no natural candidate for what is good could ever avoid the qualification, "but is it actually good?", the logical structure of the language not allowing good and a natural property to be analytic terms. The view of the naturalistic fallacy assumes the incompatibility between moral and natural terms, but Moore's own offering of an alternative, non-natural, ideal consequentialism is not met with much support. Thinkers, instead, reply that moral duties are intuitive, or that the good does indeed consist in flourishing or happiness, as is self-evident. Mill proposes an argument for utilitarianism that offers the self-evident "proof" that all people prefer pleasure to pain. Moral judgements can be described either as cognitive or non-cognitive, and natural features of the world qualify as a basis for cognitivism, offering a realism aspect to the content of moral judgements. Students might explore counterexamples of non-cognitive bases for moral judgements like Emotivism or Prescriptivism.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Properties that might qualify as the basis of the good, e.g. pleasure of flourishing
- Utilitarianism
- Virtue Theory
- Mill's proof of utilitarianism
- Hume's fork and the divide between descriptive and prescriptive language
- Moore's naturalistic fallacy and the open-question argument
- Moore's non-natural realism—ideal utilitarianism
- Cognitivism and non-cognitivism
- Emotivism, prescriptivism as responses to cognitive theories of moral judgement
- The advantages and disadvantages of a naturalistic appeal to moral judgements
- Is moral language unique with its motivational aspect?
- Rousseau and the "good nature"
- Ayer's views related to the idea that values are simply expressions of emotion.

Optional theme 4: Philosophy of religion

9. Evaluate attempts to provide a logical way to prove the existence of God/god(s). [25]

Attempts at proving God/god's existence from the meaning of the terms alone (analytic approaches) and then deploying deductive reasoning to conclude God/god's existence are clustered under the title, 'ontological' arguments. The main statement of the argument came from Anselm who concluded on the nature of perfection and necessity that God/god(s) must exist in two versions of the ontological argument. Anselm was opposed by a contemporary, Gaunilo, who contested that perfection necessitated real existence and this gap between defenders and opponents of the argument remains today, with the same fissure appearing in subsequent work, most notably, by Descartes, Kant, Russell, Plantinga and Malcolm. Thus, at the heart of the question is whether perfection can be used as a predicate that would entail existence. Kant and Russell say that the ontological argument can only go as far as saying that if a perfect being existed it would possess existence, but not that its existence is entailed by the concept of perfection. Russell agrees with Kant and tells us that given existence adds nothing to any concept, it cannot be claimed that existence confers a separate quality to a concept. Russell attempts to show that it does not involve a logical contradiction to deny the conclusion of God/god's existence from the premises, as it would be for any other sound deductive argument, like triangles having three sides. Given it is not a self-contradiction to deny the possibility of God/god(s)'s existence, then it does not stand as an analytic truth. Malcolm attempts in the 20th century to show that the concept of God/god(s) contains that her/his existence is necessary given God/god(s)'s existence is either necessary or impossible. God/god(s)'s existence would be impossible only if it were a self-contradiction to claim God/god(s)'s existence is necessary—which it is not as Malcolm and Hick claim. Plantinga also argues for a version of the argument based on the idea of maximal greatness in possible worlds. The overall objection, however, remains that the ontological argument appears to be defining some concept into existence using the notion of perfection or greatness in an inappropriate way when coupled with the fact of existence. In addition, some forms of cosmological arguments stem from an *a priori* basis that every event has a cause, and from there arguments—in denying the possibility of infinite regress—aim to establish God/god(s) as the first cause. Other cosmological arguments base their conclusions on the issues of necessity and dependence. Students might discuss other logical aspects of arguments for the existence of God/god(s), e.g. the logical problem raised by evil and suffering.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- Anselm's two statements of the ontological argument
- Gaunilo's "perfect island" response to Anselm
- Descartes's statement of the ontological argument in the *Meditations*
- Hume's objection using the fork with its gap between ideas and matters of fact
- Existence cannot be used as a predicate, e.g. Hume, Kant, and Russell
- Russell's critique of Anselm's use of the word "exist"
- Malcolm's re-stating of Anselm's argument about necessary existence and the comparison with the concept of the impossibility of God/god existing
- Plantinga's maximal greatness argument
- Teleological arguments
- Cosmological arguments.

10. Evaluate the claim that religious language does not convey anything about the material world. [25]

This question explores the nature and basis of terms used in religious language. When assertions about the divine or faith are made, how are they composed, checked, and justified? In using human language to depict supernatural, metaphysical beliefs and concepts, what are the challenges that have to be met? Is religious language meaningful? If so, in what way? Two distinct approaches to checking the meaningfulness of religious language emerge. One approach sees religious language as cognitive, mapping realism in the way it conveys its assertions. The other approach is to deny the possibility of religious language being cognitive, but maintaining meaningfulness through the way the language conveys its truth. An early attempt to explore religious language was made by thinkers such as St John of the Cross and St Augustine in the mystical tradition. They denied the possibility of humans meaningfully depicting the divine in direct language. Instead, they asserted that humans could only speak of what God is not—the *via negativa*. With an emphasis on God's transcendence and ineffability such thinkers denied the possibility of humans to say anything of content about God's person or nature. In more recent philosophy, the language used to describe God has been subject to the critical method of modern science. Following Hume, the logical positivists of the early 20th Century adopted a principle of verification to check if religious language could be deemed meaningful. Given the assumption that any metaphysical speculation was strictly meaningless, it was unsurprising that religious language failed the test that for an assertion to have meaning it had to qualify as verifiable by being either true by definition or shown to be true by empirical confirmation. Religious language, along with aesthetical and ethical language failed the test. However, a later thinker explored this conclusion and offered a possibility of verification at the end of time (Hick's eschatological verification). Flew's falsification asked for what grounds could count against a religious statement being true and used Wisdom's parable of the garden to illustrate the contention that nothing can count against a belief in God to the believer. Swinburne responded with his example of the toys in the cupboard, and Mitchell challenged Flew's contention that believers would not countenance evidence against their faith with his parable of the celestial city. Hare introduced the idea of the *blik*—a worldview that influences the way people look at the world (the example of the paranoid don) and here religious language is meaningful, not for asserting knowledge but for influencing the way the believer views the world. Wittgenstein offered meaning for religious language with his theory of 'language games'. However, non-cognitivist and perspectival approaches continue to seem counter to the propositional nature of much religious language which intends to describe God's existence and the impact of God on daily life as facts in the world. For other believers, however language that is symbolic or mythical (e.g. Tillich, Randall, Bultmann, Jung) conveys truth as meaningfully as a cognitivist view of language.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The *via negativa*
- Religious language as analogical, symbolic, mythical
- Religion as personal experience transcending language, e.g. mysticism
- The verification principle
- The falsification principle
- Eschatological verification
- *Bliks*
- Randall argued that religious language was a vehicle for conveying knowledge; he believed it offered insight into generally held beliefs, ideas, and cultural identities
- Cognitivist and non-cognitivist approaches to religious language
- Wittgenstein's "language games".

Optional theme 5: Philosophy of science

11. Evaluate the claim that the aim of science is not to seek truth about the world, but to make predictions. [25]

This question invites an evaluation of the aim of science. There are seen to be two contrasting perspectives as to science's aim. The first is that of scientific realism in which the purpose of science is to construct scientific theory that informs us about the real world. The second is instrumentalism which takes of position that science does not create a reality but it is merely a tool to predict through observation and calculation. The latter makes comments and prediction about sense data and does not venture into the realm of claiming what is real. Scientific realism makes a point of suggesting that we accept that science and reality correspond otherwise we would not accept the predictions that science makes. Scientific theories, true or false, still confirm reality as true theories correspond to reality and even false theories can sometime give true predictions. Challenges to this position come from pessimistic inductionism; a position that suggests all scientific theories are, or might become, false and therefore the authority of science can be questioned. An "approximate truth" position might be developed which suggests that scientific truths are close to the real world. In contrast instrumentalism argues that science's aim is not to present a true picture of reality. The process of verifiability and phenomenalism believe we can only talk meaningfully about sense data and therefore observation of interpretation of the results is the aim of science. Science has to create a balance between the theory and the observation. Science might not be able to progress if it remains dependent upon the tools and limitation of observation. In many ways an instrumental approach to science limits science to 'how' questions and not "why" questions.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The degree to which a theory tells us about a reality
- The epistemic aim of science is not truth, but understanding
- Whether scientific knowledge is a real claim to truth
- Popper and falsification. The removal of obsolete theories' strengths, those that cannot or are not yet challenged
- Verisimilitude: the extent to which a theory corresponds to all the real facts
- The notion of possible worlds and the theory therefore approximates to the truth
- Newtonian and Einsteinian theories creating two means of measuring the world rather than one reality replacing another
- The uncertainty principle of Heisenberg suggesting that more observation creates more doubt about the world
- The issue of phenomena in our world not being able to be observed
- Hume's cause and effect theory compared to logical or necessary connections.

12. Evaluate the role that scientific language plays in the understanding of our world. [25]

This question seeks an evaluation of the nature and function of language as used by science to aid our understanding of the world. Mostly science is concerned with theoretical models, laws or theories which combine descriptions of phenomena and observable data. It links our known experience with theories so as to give more information and the ability to predict behaviour, as well as to increase our understanding of phenomena. In scientific language models seem to be analogies of the world. For example, the use of wave models relating to light or electricity illustrates the way models can increase our understanding, whereas models of the atmosphere can help predict future weather patterns. Distinctions might be made between laws and theories in scientific language. Theories and laws described by scientific language can be linked to empirical information, observable data. The interpretation of the links might be subject to various forms of bias and consequently their objectivity might be reduced. The role of hypothesis might be explored in the building of a scientific theory to question the value or validity of a law or explanation of phenomena. Issues of induction and intuition might be investigated.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The nature and value of analogies
- The role of intuition in model construction
- The role of hypothesis in scientific language
- Confirmation bias
- The nature of scientific explanation
- Theories and law and their relationship to models
- Paradigm shifts and their impact on models, e.g. Kuhn, Feyerabend
- The limits of experimentation and available observable data
- Questioning model construction from the aspect of simplicity and elegance, and coherence
- The place of mathematical language in science
- Popper’s criticisms of simplicity and degrees of falsification
- Midgeley and ‘scientism’
- The role of human pattern-making distorting reality.

Optional theme 6: Political philosophy

13. Discuss the idea of the social contract as a way to explain the individual's relationship with the state. [25]

One possible basis for the founding and existence of the state is to appeal to what would be in its place were the state not to have come into existence. By appealing to a time prior to the formation of society, some thinkers attempted to establish the basis on which the relationship between individuals, their fellow citizens and the state comes into being. One use of the idea of the "state of nature" was by Hobbes in 17th century England where there was great political turbulence and the risk of civil war. Hobbes takes a pessimistic view of the nature of human beings, especially as they would have been without the rule of the sovereign. Such life would be "...nasty, brutish and short..." and humans would find themselves in a constant state of war—"war of all against all". In response to this natural proclivity towards competition and aggression, without any formal necessity to follow a code of conduct which has no guarantor, Hobbes says that humans compromise for the purpose of protection and enter into a contract with the sovereign in order to preserve life and possessions. Hobbes reflects the "strongman" experience of the monarchical rule of his day and his work, *Leviathan*, envisages the strongest of rulers, almost despotic in power, to ensure the protection of all people. Locke and Rousseau follow Hobbes but make a different case for the individual's freedom. Rousseau speculates about the harm that being in society has caused to the freedom of humans. "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains". Despite some advantages (to do with the experience of family life and the increase of technical skills) the experience of being in society has compromised the freedom of individuals. Rousseau historically imagines the time of the "noble savage" but acknowledges that humans by necessity must experience socialization in their nature as perfectible beings. Rousseau offers a protection against naked competition and the inequality that socialization brings by appeal to the individual's relationship with "the general will". In subsuming herself to the general will, the individual acknowledges the primacy of the people, amongst whom she exists, and some critics say that this is tantamount to an individual entering into a contract with herself—an impossibility. Other theories of social contract do not speculate about prior states and look at the conditions for civil obedience and individual freedom. Locke allows for greater individual freedom with the sovereign only retaining the right for violence and the individual delegating very few powers to the state. Kant proposes that every rational being has both a right to freedom, conferred by being a rational being, and a duty to enter into a civil condition governed by a social contract in order to preserve that freedom. More recently, John Rawls proposes a formation of society without the inherent power imbalances usually deployed on the formation of a state. For him, the state should be established by thinkers willing to be deployed at any strata within that society, able then to rise in opportunity as merited by work and talent.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The various social contracts, e.g. Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau etc.
- The social contract as a framework to conceptualize state–society relations
- Social contract, as a practice of politics and philosophy, is rooted in the 17th century and has had a lasting influence over geo-political and moral thought
- Hume's criticism denying the consent of any individual by the accident of birth to agree to a contract—the example of the press-ganged sailor offered the chance to jump ship once he awakes on-board
- The appeals to human nature for the formation of the social contract—are these convincing and tenable?
- The essence of the contract as one of self-preservation
- Is Rousseau's "general will" a form of despotism?
- Do social contracts reflect a liberal communitarian bias? See Nozick and denials of the reach of social theories.
- Social contract theory declined in the 19th century with the prominence of utilitarianism.

14. Evaluate the claim that human rights have no basis in the natural order. [25]

This question explores the basis on which claims to human rights are made. Are such rights innate? Are they inalienable or universal, as reflected in modern liberal political discourse? Have rights been invented by the hegemony of the modern political elite, given voice by the United Nations, and aired by specific pressure groups for the protection of the vulnerable? Human rights are generally understood to be innate, given by dint of what it means to be a human being. But in times of increased technical ability in fields like medicine, rights get discussed in relation to functions associated with the person in question (e.g. the work of Peter Singer). A distinction might be made between legal and moral rights, some reflecting universal matters, like the right to life, where others apply according to the mores and values of a jurisdiction, like property rights. Responses might explore differences between rights that apply to humans and those that are claimed to apply to non-human animals. Responses might articulate rights in relations to responsibilities that the rights entail, and who has the responsibility in each case. The issue of universal rights might be discussed with the question of who has responsibility to enforce such rights. Some responses might deny any basis for any rights, while others will explore the possibility of claiming rights on the pure fact of human existence, perhaps defended from a religious, sacred perspective. Other approaches might tie rights to perspectives that arise in a western or non-western context, with different emphases attached to issues like individual liberty or the flourishing of the community.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The claims of universal human rights—see the United Nations Declaration,1948
- Cultural influences on human rights
- Legal rights
- Moral rights
- The role of different groups in determining rights, e.g. religious authorities, legal authority, political authority
- Rights and responsibilities and duties
- Protected characteristics of people to qualify them for equal rights, e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age
- Rights transcending national authority, who determines and protects such rights?
- A possible hierarchy of rights
- The denial of human rights e.g. Bentham’s attack on natural rights
- The rights of non-human animals.

Optional theme 7: Social philosophy

15. Evaluate the claim that individuals, not institutions, cause injustice. [25]

The inquiry into the role of institutions regarding and their contribution to social oppression is a profound exploration deeply rooted in the realms of social philosophy. It is not uncommon to see reports accusing institutions such as the police, law courts and schools of institutional racism, sexism, or other injustices. Arguably, institutions have wielded considerable influence over societal structures, norms, and the perpetuation of social injustices. The difficulty with blaming social institutions is that they are not clearly agents. An institution is composed of many different individuals, each with their own beliefs. While, for example, a police force might be made up of many people who are not racist, a few people holding racist views, or procedures and policies that discriminate based on race might make up institutional racism, thus perpetuating injustice. One way of explaining this is that institutional injustice is just a matter of historical accident, and so individuals are not responsible. Alternatively, one might say that the institution itself is not to blame for injustices, but that individuals working within the institution are. Another approach is to treat the institution itself as an agent with moral culpability. This raises questions about agency and personhood which are normally attributed to individuals rather than institutions. It also risks letting any individuals responsible off the hook.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- What a social institution is e.g. Francesco Guala
- Social institutions and their role in legitimizing discriminatory practices
- Examples such as the shooting of Trayvon Martin and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests and calls to defund the police, or institutional sexism in health systems and medical research
- The social impact of institutions such as schools, criminal courts, universities, prisons, museums, and democratic institutions
- How institutions have prescribed roles and behaviours for individuals based on their racial identity
- The cultural influence of racial conceptions, e.g. their impact on art, literature, and media
- The influences of conceptual approaches to injustice, e.g. issues of representation, rights, racial profiling
- The concept of decolonization and ideas and theories about injustice e.g. decolonizing school curricula
- Whether social institutions can be decolonized in a way that counters institutional racism, sexism, homophobia etc.
- Misconceptions justifying colonialism and imperialism, and the role of colonialism in shaping attitudes in individuals and institutions
- How language and discourse contribute to social injustice, both through institutions and individuals
- The role of the individual in perpetuating injustice and the idea that one person alone cannot cause social injustice, but that institutions are needed
- The media and its influence on individual's prejudices
- Human nature and injustice e.g. egoism, self-preservation, the social contract
- Attempts to mitigate the role of institutions in perpetuating injustice e.g. Marxism
- Institutional constructivism where race itself is understood as a social institution e.g. Ron Mallon.

16. Evaluate the conflict between cultural relativism and the universality of human rights for minority communities. [25]

The evaluation of strategies aimed at reconciling the tension between cultural relativism and the universality of human rights concerning minority communities constitutes a vital exploration within the domain of social philosophy. This inquiry has gained increasing significance in recent times, driven by evolving perspectives on cultural diversity and human rights, coupled with a deeper appreciation of the sociocultural context that shapes these debates. Throughout history, the clash between cultural relativism and the universality of human rights has played a pivotal role in the discourse surrounding minority communities. Erroneous ontological claims regarding cultural superiority or inferiority have often been employed to undermine the rights and dignity of minority groups. These claims perpetuate harmful stereotypes and discriminatory practices, impeding the progress toward genuine equality and social justice. To critically assess these conflicting perspectives, it is essential to consider their historical and cultural contexts. Understanding how cultural relativism has been invoked to justify the suppression of minority rights, and how universal human rights frameworks aim to counteract such injustices, provides a foundation for this evaluation. Philosophical analysis can shed light on the complexities of balancing respect for cultural diversity with the imperative of safeguarding the fundamental rights of all individuals, especially those from marginalized minority communities. Moreover, this examination prompts an exploration of ethical frameworks that seek to bridge these divides, fostering an environment where the rights and dignity of minority communities are protected while respecting cultural pluralism. It underscores the significance of ongoing dialogues and the development of ethical guidelines that transcend cultural boundaries, emphasizing the universal principles of justice, equality, and human rights.

In addressing these philosophical issues students might explore:

- The fundamental tension between cultural relativism, which argues for respecting cultural differences, and the concept of universal human rights that applies to all individuals regardless of their cultural context
- Cultural diversity and its role in shaping the perspectives on human rights and minority communities
- The impact of erroneous ontological claims, such as cultural superiority, on the rights and dignity of minority groups. How do these claims perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination?
- How the clash between cultural relativism and universal human rights affects the pursuit of social justice for minority communities
- Cultural pluralism and its relevance to finding common ground between cultural relativism and universal human rights
- The role of human dignity in both cultural relativism and universal human rights
- How discriminatory practices have historically been justified through cultural relativism and the consequences for minority communities
- The tension between freedom of expression and cultural relativism. How do these concepts intersect when it comes to minority communities expressing their cultural identities?
- The importance of identity and a sense of belonging for minority communities and how these aspects are impacted by the conflict between cultural relativism and universal human rights
- The role of cultural relativism and universal human rights in promoting or hindering social cohesion in multicultural societies
- The concept of global citizenship and its implications for resolving the tension between cultural relativism and universal human rights
- The moral responsibility of individuals, institutions, and states in upholding universal human rights while respecting cultural differences
- Contemporary examples and case studies where the conflict between cultural relativism and universal human rights has had significant implications for minority communities.