

Markscheme

November 2025

Philosophy

Higher level

Paper 3

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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 6.

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 markschemes for Paper 3, there are suggested pertinent points found in the text extract relating to philosophical activity. The markschemes include suggested questions that might stimulate analysis of those points. It is not intended that all possible points raised by the text are to be covered by the students. The markbands direct examiners to rewarding the responses accordingly
- The markscheme bullet points cannot and are not intended to predict how a student will relate his or her personal experience of the DP HL Philosophy course to the text extract, so the examiner must be aware that much of the response of the student will *not* be covered by material in the markscheme; but the student's response must relate to the text extract
- Responses for part A and part B should be assessed using the distinct assessment markbands.

Paper 3 part A markbands

This task requires students to answer a two-part question based on an unseen text. The text will be of a philosophical nature and in each examination session it will focus on either philosophy and technology or philosophy and the environment. Students must answer both part A and part B of the question. Part A requires students to explain a specified concept, issue or argument from the unseen text. It is expected that students will include explicit references to the text to support their explanation.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is not used, or is consistently used inappropriately. • The explanation is minimal. Points made are superficial and frequently unclear. There are few, if any, references to the unseen text.
3–4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. • The explanation is basic and underdeveloped. Points are often imprecise or vague, and it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. There are occasional references to the unseen text.
5–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. • There is a satisfactory explanation, although this explanation lacks clarity and development in places. Relevant points are made but lack accuracy and detail. Specific references to the unseen text are made, although these are sometimes ineffective.
7–8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. • The explanation is clear, although may be in need of further development. Points made are relevant and accurate but lack detail. There are specific references to the unseen text.
9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. There is accurate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary. • The explanation is clear and well developed. Points are relevant, accurate and detailed. There are specific and effective references to the unseen text.

Paper 3 part B markbands

Part B picks out a feature of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy highlighted by the unseen text, and asks students to engage in a critical discussion of how this feature impacts the usefulness of philosophy in helping us to engage with pressing issues. Students are required to respond to this question making reference to the text and also to their own experience of doing philosophy in the philosophy course.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There is limited reference to the student’s personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are few, if any, references to the unseen text. • The response is descriptive. Any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are not included or are irrelevant. 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.
4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There is some reference to the student’s personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. References are made to the unseen text, but these are more implicit than explicit and/or lack relevance to the question. • The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
7–9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are specific references to the student’s personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. Specific references to the unseen text are made, although these sometimes lack relevance to the question or are more implicit than explicit. • The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
10–12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are explicit references to the student’s personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are specific references to the unseen text. • The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are used to support the discussion. There is some discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
13–15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very good understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are explicit references to the student’s personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are specific and explicit references to the unseen text. • The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used effectively to support the discussion. Different points of view are identified and evaluated. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Unseen text – philosophy and contemporary issues

- (a) With reference to the text and your own knowledge, explain the tension between providing for the livelihoods of people and conserving the environment. [10]**

This unseen text focuses on the relationship between nature and human beings, which is one of the pieces of prescribed content within the “philosophy and the environment” topic. It should be noted that in this 10-mark part A question, students are only required to explain the tension between providing for the livelihoods of people and conserving the environment, they are not required to engage in critical discussion and evaluation. This is signalled by the use of the “explain” command term.

Responses should include specific and explicit references to the text. For example, students could make reference to:

- the claim that attitudes towards the environment in China are influenced by Confucianism
- the idea that environmental issues stem from man’s use of nature
- the compatibility between development and conservation
- Mencius’s advice about managing the environment by caring for it and planning ahead
- Wastefulness, e.g. the claim that “when food meant for human beings is so plentiful as to be thrown to the dogs and pigs, you fail to realize that it is time for garnering”
- responsibility for the environment.

Responses should also include explicit reference to students’ own wider knowledge of philosophy and the environment, and the tension between providing for the livelihoods of people and conserving the environment. For example, students might include reference to:

- deep and shallow ecology
- the idea of stewardship
- duties of the state towards its citizens, e.g. Hobbes, Rousseau
- whether deep ecology is compatible with anthropocentrism
- whether a focus on the extrinsic value of nature is preferable to a focus on its intrinsic value
- examples where people’s livelihoods are challenged by conservation efforts.

(b) With reference to the text and your own experience of doing philosophy, discuss the role of philosophy in relation to environmental problems. [15]

This question invites discussion of the role of philosophy in relation to environmental problems. Students are required to explicitly make reference to both the unseen text and also to their own experience of doing philosophy in the DP philosophy course. It should be noted that in this 15-mark part B question, students are required to engage in critical discussion and evaluation, signalled by the use of the “discuss” command term.

Students might explore:

- historical influences on environmental thinking, e.g. stewardship and dominion in the Old Testament
- the similarities and differences between environmental problems in Mencius’s lifetime and those faced today
- whether philosophical views influence society
- ideological influences on climate action, e.g. climate change denial by some religious groups
- politics, the role of philosophical thinking in politics, and attitudes towards the environment
- whether Mencius’s advice is valuable today
- whether philosophy has anything new to contribute to how we approach contemporary issues
- questions about whether philosophy makes progress
- the value of being familiar with the history of philosophy, e.g. Ortega y Gasset.

Responses should include specific and explicit references to the text. For example, students could make reference to:

- the diversity of Confucian viewpoints discussed in the text
- Mencius’s claim that when the King fails to plan ahead and blame the harvest, he is as good as killing your citizens
- the idea that China is a major polluter
- the historical influences on Chinese environmental policies.

Responses should also include explicit references to students’ own experience of doing philosophy. For example, students might reflect on:

- experiences of learning about ancient philosophy, e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Confucious, Lao Tzu
 - environmental philosophy, e.g. Naess, Lovelock
 - issues with historical philosophical works, e.g. racism in Kantian thinking
 - whether philosophical ideas are timeless and objective, or subjective and in need of frequent revision
 - Mencius’s philosophical method, contrasted with other methods, e.g. Plato’s dialectic, analytic philosophy
 - the connection between environmental issues and political philosophy from Plato, Mencius, Lao Tzu etc. to Hobbes, Rousseau, and more modern thinkers, e.g. Rawls
 - cases where modern issues require new solutions, e.g. recent advances in artificial intelligence, the intensifying nature of the climate crisis.
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