



National
Qualifications
2026

2026 Philosophy

Paper 2

Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by Qualifications Scotland appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

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General marking principles for Higher Philosophy

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the specific marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or specific marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) We use the term 'or any other acceptable answer' to allow for any possible variation in candidate responses. Award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of candidate responses. Candidates may gain marks where the answer is accurate but expressed in their own words.
- (d) Where candidates give points of knowledge without specifying the context, reward these unless it is clear that they do not refer to the context of the question.

In giving their responses, candidates should demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding.

- **Knowledge:** award **1 mark** for each relevant, developed point of knowledge and understanding which is used to respond to the question. Not all related information will be relevant. For example, it is unlikely that biographical information will be relevant.
- **Analysis:** this is the breakdown of something into its constituent parts and detection of the relationships of those parts and the way they are organised. This might, for example, involve identifying the component parts of an argument and showing how they are related, explaining how an argument develops or identifying key features of a philosophical position.
- **Evaluation:** this occurs when a judgement is made on the basis of certain criteria. The judgement may be based on internal criteria such as consistency and logical accuracy or on external criteria such as whether a philosophical position accords with widely held moral intuitions.

Marking instructions for each question

Section 1 – ARGUMENTS IN ACTION

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
1.	(a)		What distinguishes statements from other types of sentences, such as questions, commands and exclamations?	1	Statements are the only types of sentences that have a truth value.
	(b)		What is a premise?	1	A premise is a reason that is given to support the main claim of an argument.
	(c)		What is a conclusion?	1	A conclusion is the main claim an argument aims to establish.
2.	(a)		Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. <i>‘We should spend more time reading books. Reading improves our vocabulary and helps us think more critically. Unlike watching television, it actively engages the mind and fosters imagination. By reading regularly, we can become more knowledgeable and creative.’</i> What is the main conclusion of this argument?	1	We should spend more time reading books.

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
	(b)		Rewrite the premise below as if you were putting the above argument into standard form. ‘Unlike watching television, it actively engages the mind and fosters imagination.’	1	Award a mark for replacing the word ‘it’ with ‘reading’. Either <i>Unlike watching television, reading actively</i> engages the mind and fosters imagination. OR <i>Reading actively</i> engages the mind and fosters imagination.
	(c)		‘Reading improves our vocabulary and helps us think more critically.’ Is this premise acceptable? Give a reason for your answer.	1	- the statement is acceptable because it is common knowledge that reading improves our vocabulary and helps us think more critically - the statement is plausible because it is possible that reading improves our vocabulary and helps us think more critically Or any other acceptable answer.
3.	(a)		Give an example of an argument that is represented by the following diagrams.	1	Any argument in which two premises give direct and independent support to the conclusion.
	(b)			1	Any argument in which the premises work together to support the conclusion.
4.			State which one of the following inference indicators typically signals a conclusion. A – since B – consequently C – because D – for example	1	B/Consequently

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
5.	(a)		Which one of the following statements is correct? A – Deductive arguments always rely on statistical data. B – Deductive arguments aim to guarantee the conclusion if the premises are true. C – Inductive arguments are valid in all cases. D – Inductive arguments never involve linked premises.	1	B/Deductive arguments aim to guarantee the conclusion if the premises are true.
	(b)		<i>‘The school bus has come every day this year at 3 o’clock. Therefore, it will come at 3 o’clock tomorrow.’</i> Explain why this is an inductive argument.	2	The argument is inductive because the fact that the bus has come at a particular time every day makes it very likely that it will come at the same time tomorrow, (1 mark) but it is still conceivable that it might not. (1 mark) Because this argument moves from observations based on past experiences to predictions about the future, (1 mark) the conclusion will only ever be probable at best. (1 mark)
6.			Which one of the following statements is a feature of confirmation bias? A – Rejecting premises that seem implausible. B – Ignoring information that contradicts one’s own beliefs. C – Constructing strong analogical arguments. D – Determining deductive validity. E – Confirming that a premise is true.	1	B – Ignoring information that contradicts one’s own beliefs.

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
7.	(a)		Explain why the following statement is incorrect: If the premises of an argument are true and the conclusion is true, the argument must be valid. 1 mark may be awarded for an appropriate example.	2	Validity has nothing to do with the truth of the premises or the conclusion, it is about the structure of the argument. (1 mark) An argument with true premises and a true conclusion may be inductive, and inductive arguments are never valid. (1 mark) The premises and the conclusion can be true when the premises do not guarantee the truth of the conclusion. (1 mark)
	(b)		Give two reasons why the following argument is invalid: P1: If it is raining, the ground will be wet. P2: The ground is wet. C: Therefore, it is raining.	2	Candidates should be awarded 1 mark for any of the following points: - the argument is invalid because the truth of the premises does not guarantee the truth of the conclusion - the ground could be wet on a dry day because someone was washing their car - it is an affirming the consequent fallacy

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
8.	(a)		Consider the following argument: <i>‘Premise: Streaming services make it easier than ever to access TV programmes. Conclusion: Therefore, traditional TV channels will soon become a thing of the past.’</i> Why is this premise not sufficient to establish the conclusion?	1	There may be things screened on traditional TV channels that are not available on streaming platforms, so TV channels may not become a thing of the past. (1 mark) Lots of people enjoy watching things ‘live’ at the time of broadcast, so TV channels may not become a thing of the past. (1 mark) Or any other appropriate explanation for why this premise is not sufficient.
	(b)		There are many ways to strengthen this argument. Suggest a premise that would add support to the conclusion.	1	Any appropriate premise, such as: - streaming platforms provide all the content provided by traditional tv channels - people’s choices about how to access tv programmes are based on convenience - people are using traditional TV channels less and less.
9.	(a)		My boyfriend said he would give me a ring on Saturday, but all I got was a phonecall. Therefore, I can’t trust him. Explain the ambiguity in this argument.	1	‘A ring’ has two meanings: it can mean a phonecall and it can mean a type of jewellery.
	(b)		Name the type of ambiguity present in this argument.	1	Lexical ambiguity or equivocation.
	(c)		Explain how the ambiguity affects the probability of this argument’s conclusion.	2	The conclusion is not likely to be true based on the premises if ‘a ring’ is used to mean different things in each premise. (1 mark) If your boyfriend meant he would give you a phonecall, and he did give you a phonecall, then that does not give you any reason not to trust him. (1 mark) If your boyfriend meant he would give you the jewellery, then he is untrustworthy if he only gave you a phonecall. (1 mark) Regardless of what was intended by the boyfriend, if the ambiguity meant that the person felt they had been misled then they would have a reason not to trust them. (1 mark)

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
10.			Explain whether the following appeal to authority is legitimate or fallacious: <i>‘Dr. Smith, a leading heart doctor, says that her new heart medication is effective. Therefore, we should believe it works.’</i> Award a maximum of 1 mark for general explanations of a legitimate/fallacious appeal to authority.	3	Candidates should be credited for any of the following points: • an appeal to authority is legitimate when the authority appealed to has expertise on the matter in question (1 mark) • they are legitimate if they do not have a vested interest/bias (1 mark) • as a leading heart doctor, we would expect her to be an expert on heart medication (1 mark) • if her new heart medication is something she herself has developed, then she has a vested interest/bias, so we might consider the appeal to be fallacious (1 mark) Or any other appropriate explanation for why they are or are not a legitimate authority.
11.			Give a definition of a post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy. No marks will be awarded for examples.	2	An argument in which it is claimed that because X occurred before Y, X was the cause of Y (1 mark), when there is no/insufficient reason given to support the claim that there is any causal connection between X and Y. (1 mark)
12.	(a)		<i>‘You can’t trust her argument that we should be concerned about climate change because she flies on private jets and they are a major cause of carbon emissions.’</i> Why is the ad hominem reasoning in this argument fallacious	1	Just because her behaviour is inconsistent with her claim does not make the claim wrong. (1 mark) OR It is irrelevant that she flies on private jets as to whether we should be concerned about climate change. (1 mark)
	(b)		Identify the type of ad hominem in the above argument.	1	Tu quoque/hypocrisy. (1 mark)

Section 2 – KNOWLEDGE AND DOUBT

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
13.			What is the Cogito?	1	Candidates should be awarded 1 mark for any of the following: • ‘I am; I exist’ • ‘I think therefore I am’
14.			In Meditation 2, how does Descartes arrive at the Cogito?	3	Candidates should be awarded 1 mark for any of the following: • he considers the possibility that the evil demon is deceiving him about his own existence • he realises that if he is being deceived then he must be thinking • he concludes that if he thinks then he exists • even if Descartes believes that ‘there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies’, it does not follow that he does not exist • his conclusion that ‘this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.’ Or any other appropriate responses. Candidates should not be credited for discussing any aspect of the method of doubt.

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
15.			How convincing is Descartes' claim that the Cogito provides a secure foundation for knowledge? Candidates should be awarded 1 mark for each point. Further marks can be given for development of each point.	6	Candidates may consider the following (and other) evaluative points about the Cogito itself: • the phrase 'I am; I exist' is self-authenticating • any time you express the thought or simply think it in your mind, it must be true • can we fully trust in our powers of reason and logic, given the doubt raised by the hypothetical malicious demon? • is it self-evidently true if it relies on a hidden premise? There are clearly logical steps involved in Descartes' argument: – premise 1: – If I'm thinking then I must exist – premise 2: – I am thinking – conclusion: – I must exist • does the concept 'I' contain more than Descartes is entitled to know, given the doubts he has raised? • is the Cogito trivial and therefore an unlikely foundation for further knowledge claims? • can Descartes be certain of a persistent self? Candidates may consider Descartes' use of the Cogito in establishing a foundation for knowledge, eg: • Descartes' attempt to use the cogito to establish the criteria for clear and distinct ideas assumes the reliability of reason • Descartes tries to establish in Meditation Three that God would not allow us to be deceived about our clear and distinct ideas, but his argument is circular Or other appropriate responses.

Section 3 – MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
16.			Explain Kant's use of the categorical imperative to establish our moral duties. Award 1 mark for a relevant point and additional marks for appropriate development of that point.	6	These are likely to include the following: • a maxim for the proposed action must be identified. A maxim is an underlying principle of action or rule of conduct • formulations of the categorical imperative, 'Act only on that maxim that you can at the same time will as a universal law' • 'act in such a way as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of anyone else, always as an end and never merely as a means' • a contradiction in conception occurs when it would not be logically possible to universalise the maxim • a contradiction in the will occurs when it would be possible to universalise the maxim but a rational person would not will that it is universalised • a maxim would only pass the categorical imperative if it satisfies the demands of the contradiction in conception and the contradiction in the will • if there is a contradiction in conception, then it is our perfect duty not to perpetrate that action • if there is a contradiction in the will, then it is our imperfect duty to do the opposite • we have perfect duties not to act in ways that treat people as mere means to an end • we have imperfect duties to respect people's goals (ends) and thus to help them to achieve them.

Question			General Marking Instructions for this type of question	Max Mark	Specific Marking Instructions for this question
17.			How effective is the categorical imperative as a process to establish the correct moral actions? Award 1 mark for a relevant point and additional marks for appropriate development of that point.	4	These are likely to include the following: • because it is based on reason, determining the right action is accessible to everybody (1 mark) • it is an objective process, so it removes the temptation to account for individual feelings (1 mark) • the process gives us compelling reasons to accept the moral directive (1 mark) • there may be difficulties in formulating the maxim of an action as there could be different ways to describe the underlying principle (1 mark) • there may be a conflict of perfect duties, and Kant does not make clear how to deal with these (1 mark) • it may not lead to exclusively moral imperatives. Eg, a maxim like ‘always eat healthily’ may pass the categorical imperative but does not seem like a moral duty (1 mark) • there is a problem with strictly following perfect duties which are derived from the categorical imperative, because Kant insists there can be no exceptions. However, this could lead to undesirable consequences. (1 mark) Eg, in the case of the murderer pursuing a victim, it seems wrong to insist that we tell him where his victim is hiding (1 mark) • there is a problem with ignoring consequences, as these intuitively seem relevant to moral actions (1 mark) • imperfect duties are problematic, because Kant doesn’t make it clear when we should carry them out (1 mark). It could be argued that these form the majority of our moral decisions, so it is an oversight not to have clarity on these (1 mark)

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]