

analysis. A targeted and balanced philosophical assessment of the claims made as a dialogue was the mark of an excellent answer.

In the Community of Inquiry questions, written responses that were succinct and precise in clarification and evaluation were evaluated positively. Although lists of statements which clarified the argument were encouraged, some candidates provided verbatim lists or overly lengthy sentences. Other candidates simplified the argument too much and resulted in candidates missing important points. Candidates who paraphrased accurately and succinctly generally performed better.

A number of candidates provided a diagram or 'natural deduction' style representation (i.e. a list of premises and conclusion) of their argument as part of their essay. Where a candidate had written a clear, concise introduction which set out their conclusion and stated explicitly how they intended to argue for it, providing a diagram did not add anything to the clarity of such an argument and was gratuitous, unnecessary and an interruption to the progress of the argument. Candidates should focus on giving well supported reasons for their conclusions, for instance using relevant examples or counter examples, to plan and structure a systematic and well supported argument. If their examples came from the philosophical tradition (e.g. thinkers and ideas) then candidates were expected to refer to philosophers and their ideas in a way that shows an understanding of the relevance, rather than doing so simply to display knowledge.

Candidates must evaluate cogency correctly and use the technical language appropriately and accurately. Statements can be either premises, sub-conclusions or conclusions, but not more than one. There appeared to be some confusion about the meaning of the term 'premise'. Many candidates used the term as though it were synonymous with 'argument.' Others used the term as though it were a synonym for 'separable statement,' leading to confused remarks. Using the correct disciplinary terminology correctly is essential and not handling the terminology properly was a weakness for several candidates.

Section Three provided candidates with a diverse range of accessible topics on which to write an extended answer, and there were some excellent responses. Two of the five questions were by far the most popular. Section Three exhibited typical trends in performance from the candidates. There appeared to be time-management problems with candidates hastily producing an argument that had merit, but the claims were not fully fleshed out. Most candidates demonstrated structure and clarity in their responses with a clear and succinct thesis statement, a number of well-structured body paragraphs and a conclusion summarising the argument made.

Candidates often failed to respond to the statement in its entirety and instead focused on one element. While some modification of a thesis was possible when arguing for or against a statement, missing out a major component of the statement, or rewriting the statement so that it means something quite distinct, severely impacted the cogency of the response.

Advice for candidates

Section One.

- Read the questions carefully at least twice before attempting an answer.
- Give yourself enough time to check over your responses.
- A clear understanding of the meaning (truth conditions, as in, what makes the statement true or false) of the connectives (if/then, and, or etc.) is important. This includes a grasp of how the conditional is used to express necessary and sufficient conditions.

- Understanding the difference between premises, sub-conclusions and conclusions and between acceptability, validity and cogency is essential.
- Recognise that giving a reason for why a specific argument is cogent requires more than simply providing the definition of cogency.
- When you are asked to write out separable statements in full, inference indicators should be eliminated, and you must clarify the referent of any demonstrative pronoun appearing in the statement so as to remove any ambiguity of reference.

Section Two

- Avoid structuring your responses strictly according to previous marking keys, as this can lead to a lengthy repetitive response that fails to adequately fulfill the objectives of summarising, clarifying and evaluating the dialogue or passage.
- Avoid verbatim reproductions of statements made in the dialogue or passage. Instead, demonstrate your understanding of the dialogue or passage by succinctly summarising it in your own words.
- Providing a diagram for the sake of it is definitely not encouraged. Understand that a diagram of an argument is a step in the process of clarification and is not assessed as part of your skills in evaluation.
- Lengthy and verbatim descriptive recounts of the argument in the passage must be avoided.
- Community of Inquiry questions present you with a dialogue for analysis. It is not two interspersed passage analyses. Evaluate the contributions of each participant with regard for their adequacy and relevance as responses to remarks made elsewhere in the dialogue.

Section Three

- Spend time thinking about and planning your essay.
- Make sure you give yourself enough time to write your essay. It is worth 30% of your examination grade and you ought to give it sufficient time. One way to ensure that you devote sufficient time to the construction of your argument is to consider completing it first before you get into the other sections of the paper, but this is by no means necessary.
- You must produce an answer that responds directly and relevantly to the question you have selected. A pre-prepared essay with only tangential relevance to the question actually asked in the examination paper will not achieve well.
- Be prepared to write on a range of topics. Even though you are given five options to choose from, there may not be a question that directly addresses your preferred topic. It is best to have a back-up (or two) that you feel confident to write about.
- You must consider an objection to the view you are putting forward. Ask yourself, how might someone who didn't share my position criticise the argument I am making? Then try to reply to that criticism in some way.
- Begin with a succinct introductory paragraph that clearly states the position you intend to argue for and which offers a preview of the argument you will present in defence of that position.
- To do well in this section of the paper it is not enough to merely describe and recount information about philosophers and about the various different points of view that are relevant to the question. Whilst it is good to demonstrate a knowledge of some of the available positions and an awareness of their progenitors, this knowledge must be marshalled in support of an argument and position of your own formed in response to the question you are answering.

Advice for teachers

- Understanding the connectives, especially conditionals, is a crucial element in the curriculum whose significance ramifies across other syllabus content points. A thorough grasp of the connectives will aid students in recognising relations of logical equivalence, and to recognise valid and invalid arguments. It will also aid them in comprehending the structure of arguments more generally, in focusing their attention on ways in which arguments can be criticised, as well as in constructing their own arguments.
- Ensure that your students have a thorough grasp of the various ways in which conditionals can be expressed ('if A then B', 'B, if A', 'not-A unless B', 'A only if B', 'whenever A, B' etc.) and that they properly understand the conditions being asserted in the various formations, e.g., as in the cases mentioned, the sufficiency of A for B, and the necessity of B for A.
- Throughout the year, give your students practise at planning relevant essay responses to unfamiliar essay prompts. Assist students to practise using the full 10 minutes of reading time to select a question and construct a line of reasoning in their heads.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Critical reasoning (30 Marks)

On the whole, students performed quite well in Section One where a broad range of syllabus content points were assessed. Many candidates displayed an admirable proficiency with the skills being assessed here. Understanding the meaning of conditionals and other connectives could be improved, as could re-writing of premises.

Section Two: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (40 Marks)

Section Two, comprising of the dialogue and passage analyses, elicited some laudable responses from many candidates. However, a number of candidates appeared to be structuring their responses in accordance with the subsections displayed in the marking keys for this section from previous years' examinations. They did this in a way that actively detracted from their fulfillment of the main objectives for these questions, namely, to produce a summary, clarification and evaluation of the dialogue and passages.

Section Three: Construction of argument (30 Marks)

In Section Three, candidates answer one question from five alternatives. This section of the examination appeared to be the most challenging for candidates. On the whole, the extended arguments seemed to be of a higher standard than previous years. It was encouraging to see the number of candidates whose essays made consideration of objections to the view they were putting forward.