

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 of premises, 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 to remove any ambiguity of reference.

Section Two

- Avoid structuring your responses strictly according to previous marking keys, as these may be modified year on year, and this may lead to a long, repetitive response that fails to demonstrate your ability to succinctly and clearly summarise, clarify and evaluate the dialogue or passage.
- Summarise statements made, rather than reproducing them verbatim.
- Do not provide a diagram unless it makes a significant contribution to the clarification of the dialogue or passage.
- Remember that the Community of Inquiry (COI) is a dialogue, 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.
- It is essential that you evaluate cogency correctly and use the technical language appropriately and accurately.

Section Three

- Give yourself adequate time to plan and to write your extended argument. It is worth 30% of the examination. The examination design brief suggest the planning and writing should take 50 minutes for this section. Consider completing it first before you get into the other sections of the paper, but this is by no means obligatory.
- You must produce an answer that responds directly and relevantly to the question you have selected. A pre-prepared response with only tangential relevance to the question actually asked in the examination paper will not achieve a good mark.
- 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 points of view that are relevant to the question. While it is good to demonstrate a knowledge of various philosophical positions, this knowledge must be marshalled in support of an argument of your own, formed in response to the question you are answering.
- When including objections in your reasoning, do not use superficial or straw man objections, if the examples used come from the philosophical tradition (e.g. thinkers and ideas) then you are expected to refer to philosophers and their ideas in a way that

demonstrates an understanding of their relevance, rather than doing so simply to display your knowledge.

Advice for teachers

- Understanding the connectives, especially conditionals, is a crucial element in the curriculum and this 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.
- Remind your students that a Community of Inquiry (COI) is a dialogue, not two separate and unrelated pieces of reasoning. There are several fallacies that are particularly relevant to dialogue, for instance straw man and ad hominem.
- Throughout the year, give your students practise at planning relevant essay responses to unfamiliar essay prompts. Assist students to practise using reading time to select a question and construct a line of reasoning in their heads.
- Ensure that your students have a working understanding of the overarching topics that an examination could focus on, and provide practise for them to scrutinise that their responses engage explicitly and carefully with each philosophical term or phrase within the statement.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Critical reasoning (30 Marks)

Candidates demonstrated a range of abilities in Section One, which had a high attempt rate across all questions and where a broad range of syllabus content points were assessed. While some candidates performed well and provided a balanced analysis that was succinct and accurate, others simplified their arguments too much and therefore missed important philosophical points. Understanding the meaning of conditionals and other connectives could have been improved by some candidates, as could re-writing of premises. However, many candidates displayed proficiency with the skills being assessed here.

Section Two: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (40 Marks)

Candidate performance in Section Two, comprising of the dialogue and passage analyses, was relatively consistent across the two questions and elicited some praiseworthy 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. This detracted from their fulfilment of the main objectives for these questions, namely, to produce a summary, clarification and evaluation of the dialogue and passages. There was, however, a general improvement this year in candidates' responses to this section when evaluating the dialogue as a dialogue, not merely two separate and unrelated arguments, and with engagement with fallacies. An analysis of answers given by candidates, presented the impression that they were generally able to allocate an appropriate time for answering Section Two questions.

Section Three: Construction of argument (30 Marks)

Section Three provided candidates with a diverse range of accessible topics on which to write an extended answer, and there were some high-quality responses. Of the five

questions, Question 14 was by far the most popular. Overall, candidates appeared to spend sufficient time on this section, however there were still some instances where candidates perhaps hastily produced an argument that had merit, but that contained controversial assertions that were not adequately supported. A pleasing number of 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. Some candidates, who appeared to display a superficial level of understanding of the philosophical topics, were able to increase their marks through the display of moderately strong reasoning skills. Some candidates struggled to ensure that their response engaged explicitly and meticulously with each philosophical term or phrase within the statement, rather than focussing on one element. While some modification of a thesis by candidates 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 quality of some candidates' response.

In Section Three, candidates answered one question from five alternatives. This section of the examination appeared to be the most challenging for candidates. It was encouraging to see the number of candidates whose responses made consideration of objections to the view they were putting forward. The scope and specificity of the available statements in this section provided candidates with an appropriate basis to provide responses that allowed for clear discrimination. Complete failures of relevance were rare and attempts to engage objections to their positions were the rule not exception. That said, candidates still tended to engage with straw man versions of the objections to their positions, instead of accepting the substantive concerns facing their thesis. The challenge facing candidates was to use subtle and relevant concepts/theories to develop or ground their thesis, while recognising the assumptions, limitations, and oppositions to such a thesis.