2020 Philosophy Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

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Subject assessment advice, based on the previous years’ assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis

Students apply their knowledge of reasoning and argument in identifying and analysing the arguments of others. They provide evidence and reasons to support or refute counter arguments. For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* reasoning and argument
* critical analysis
* communication.

The more successful responses commonly:

* focused on the arguments used within the text they are analysing and the critical analysis of those arguments
* selected texts from popular media with a clear philosophical focus
* critically analysed and evaluated the arguments, philosophical assumptions and logic used in the texts studied
* developed counter arguments in response to the arguments identified within the text, supported by evidence and reasons
* provided detail when referring to the type and nature of premises
* named arguments accurately.

The less successful responses commonly:

* provided a generic discussion about types of arguments
* created their own arguments
* recounted the text or its ‘back story’ rather than focusing on analysing the arguments within the text
* did not use philosophical terminology accurately (C2)
* provided teacher rather than student evidence (e.g.) marksheets
* did not provide evidence of all tasks within the task type.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Students undertake three issues analysis assessments, one for each of the key areas of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Students identify:

* why the chosen issue is a philosophical issue
* different responses to the philosophical issue
* what position they will take in response to the philosophical issue
* a justifiable defence for the position they have taken
* how they will communicate this position to others.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning and argument
* communication.

The more successful responses commonly:

* showed sophisticated development and defence of their own position on the philosophical question
* focussed on the philosophical positions and philosophers’ arguments related to the question or issue
* defended a position in relation to the question.

The less successful responses commonly:

* explained the question or issue being discussed at length
* did not support a specific position in relation to the question.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Issues Study

Students undertake one issues study.

They examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas, choosing the issue in negotiation with their teacher. Students consider the following questions:

* why is it a philosophical issue?
* what positions do various philosophers hold on the issue?
* what are the philosophers’ reasons for holding these positions?
* what objections or counter examples are relevant to these positions?
* what is the student’s own position, and why?

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning and argument
* critical analysis
* communication.

The more successful responses commonly:

* developed a well-framed question that allowed for exploration of more than one philosophical position related to an issue
* highlighted a range of philosophical positions and philosopher’s arguments related to the question (as opposed to the issue), leading to the development of the students’ own position in response to the question
* coherently and convincingly defended a position on the question (RA3)
* used quotes to support the argument
* analysed the arguments and logic in students’ own words.

The less successful responses commonly:

* recounted the text rather than discussed a range of related philosophical positions
* provided long lists describing aspects of the issue
* included bibliographic information about philosophers
* didn’t present and defend their own position
* did not accurately reference sources.