Philosophy & Reason General Senior Syllabus 2019 v1.2

Subject report 2020

February 2021

Contents

Introduction

The first summative year for the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system was unexpectedly challenging. The demands of delivering new assessment requirements and processes were amplified by disruptions to senior schooling arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant the new system was forced to adapt before it had been introduced — the number of summative internal assessments was reduced from three to two in all General subjects. Schools and the QCAA worked together to implement the new assessment processes and the 2020 Year 12 cohort received accurate and reliable subject results.

Queensland's innovative new senior assessment system combines the flexibility and authenticity of school-based assessment, developed and marked by classroom teachers, with the rigour and consistency of external assessment set and marked by QCAA-trained assessment writers and markers. The system does not privilege one form of assessment over another, and both teachers and QCAA assessors share the role of making high-stakes judgments about the achievement of students. Our commitment to rigorous external quality assurance guarantees the reliability of both internal and external assessment outcomes.

Using evidence of student learning to make judgments on student achievement is just one purpose of assessment. In a sophisticated assessment system, it is also used by teachers to inform pedagogy and by students to monitor and reflect on their progress.

This post-cycle report on the summative assessment program is not simply being produced as a matter of record. It is intended that it will play an active role in future assessment cycles by providing observations and findings in a way that is meaningful and helpful to support the teaching and learning process, provide future students with guidance to support their preparations for summative assessment, and promote transparency and accountability in the broader education community. Reflection and research are necessary for the new system to achieve stability and to continue to evolve. The annual subject report is a key medium for making it accessible to schools and others.

Background

Purpose

The annual subject report is an analysis of the previous year's full summative assessment cycle. This includes endorsement of summative internal assessment instruments, confirmation of internal assessment marks and external assessment.

The report provides an overview of the key outcomes of one full teaching, learning and assessment cycle for each subject, including:

- information about the application of the syllabus objectives through the design and marking of internal and external assessments
- information about the patterns of student achievement in each subject for the assessment cycle.

It also provides advice to schools to promote continuous improvement, including:

- identification of effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- identification of areas for improvement and recommendations to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- provision of tangible examples of best practice where relevant, possible and appropriate.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders and teachers to inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation. The report is to be used by schools and teachers to assist in assessment design practice, in making assessment decisions and in preparing students for external assessment.

The report is publicly available to promote transparency and accountability. Students, parents, community members and other education stakeholders can learn about the assessment practices and outcomes for General subjects (including alternative sequences and Senior External Examination subjects, where relevant) and General (Extension) subjects.

Report preparation

The report includes analyses of data and other information from the processes of endorsement, confirmation and external assessment, and advice from the chief confirmer, chief endorser and chief marker, developed in consultation with and support from QCAA subject matter experts.

Subject data summary

Subject enrolments

Number of schools offering the subject: 26.

Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4*
Number of students completed	477	494	492

*Units 3 and 4 figure includes students who were not rated.

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Not rated
Unit 1	464	10	3
Unit 2	478	12	4

Units 3 and 4 internal assessment results

> **2020 COVID-19 adjustments**
>
> To support Queensland schools, teachers and students to manage learning and assessment during the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the QCAA Board approved the removal of one internal assessment for students completing Units 3 and 4 in General and Applied subjects.
>
> In General subjects, students completed two internal assessments and an external assessment. Schools made decisions based on QCAA advice and their school context. Therefore, across the state some instruments were completed by most schools, some completed by fewer schools and others completed by few or no schools. In the case of the latter, the data and information for these instruments has not been included.

Total results for internal assessment
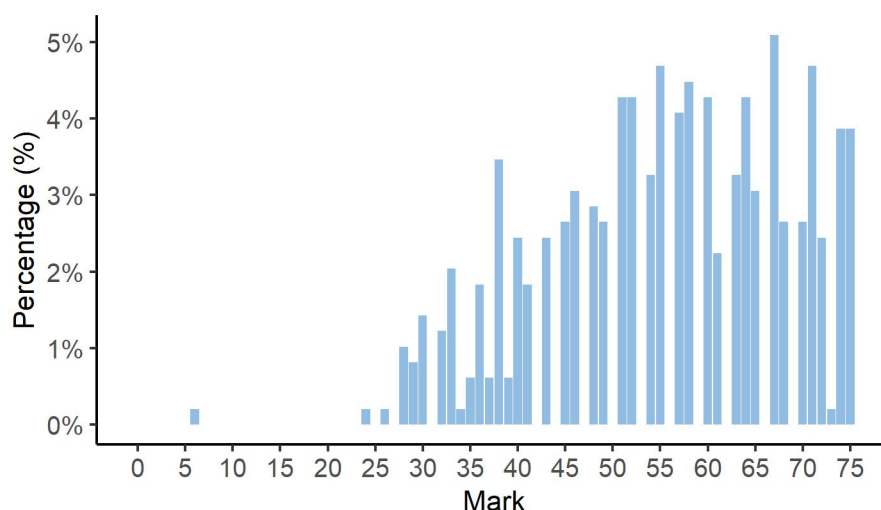
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IA1 total
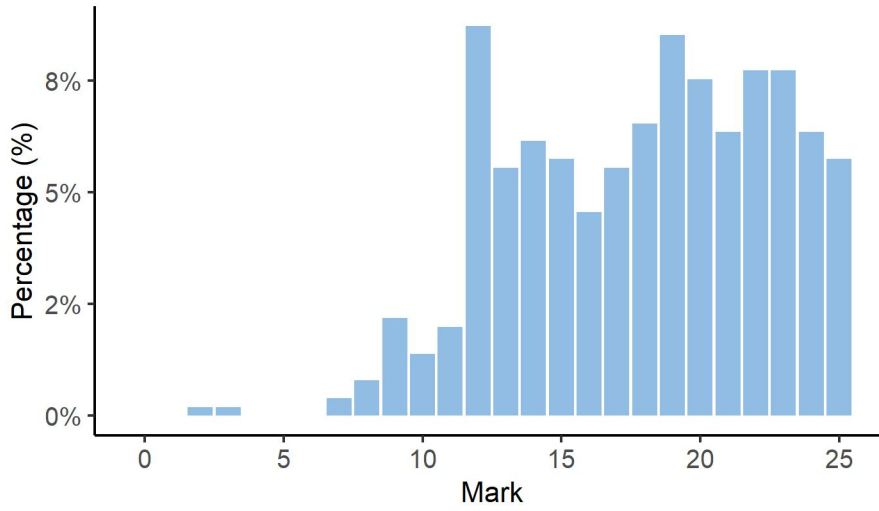
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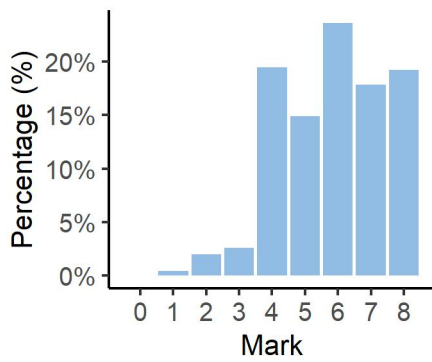
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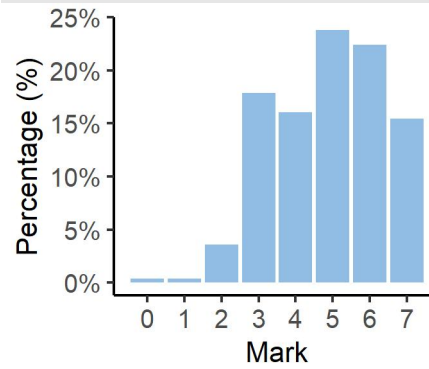
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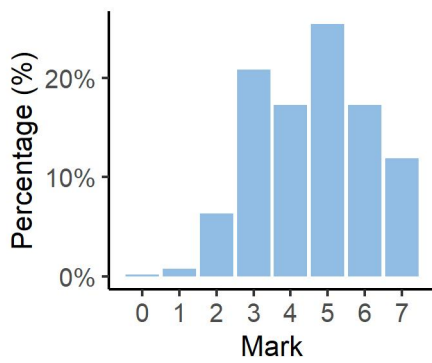
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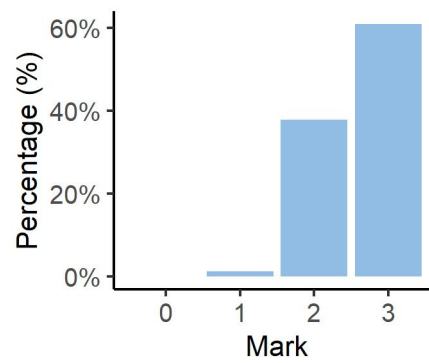
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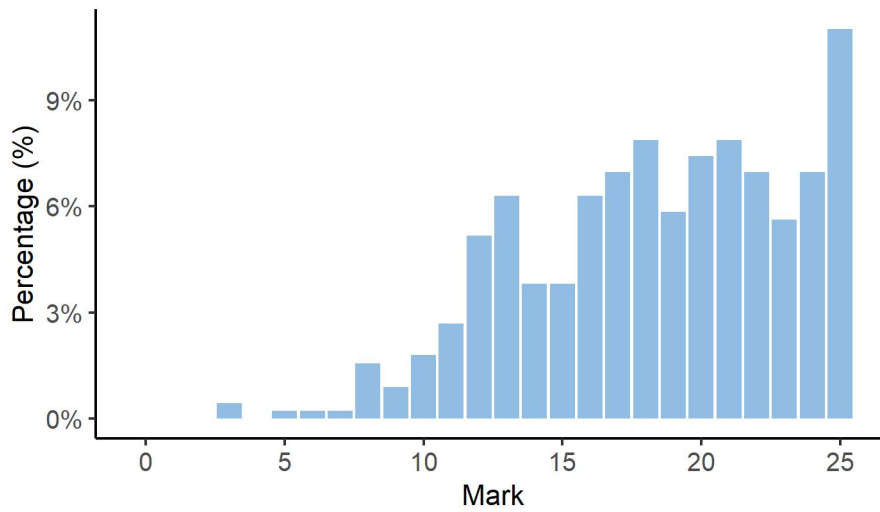
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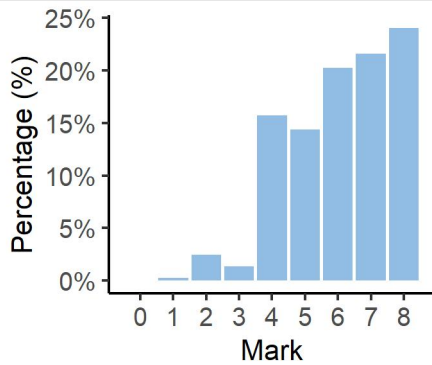
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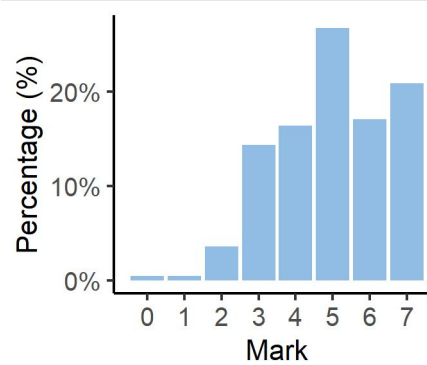
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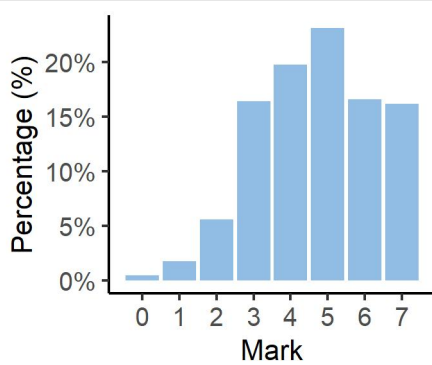
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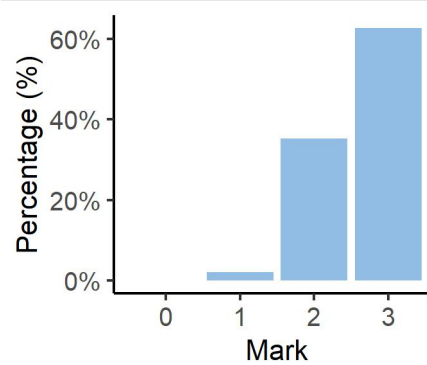
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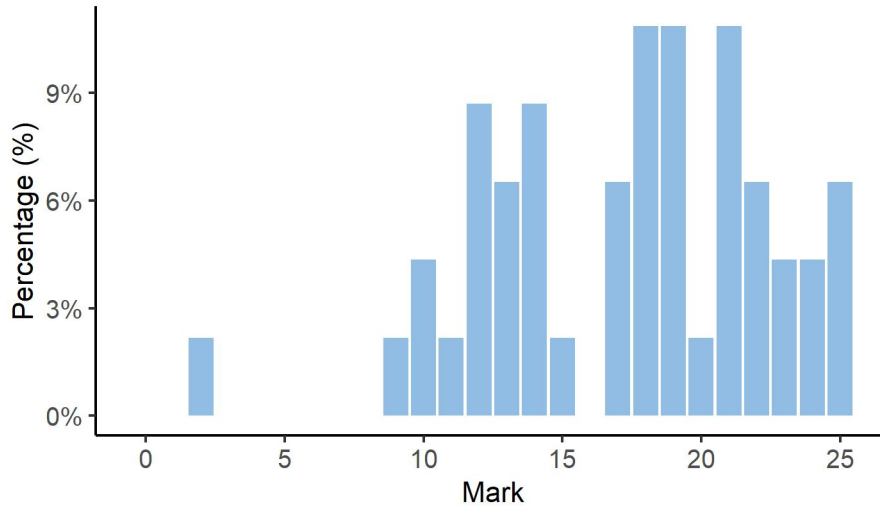
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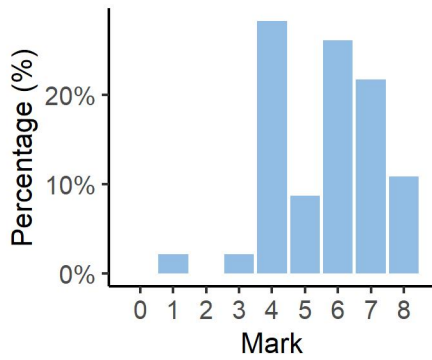
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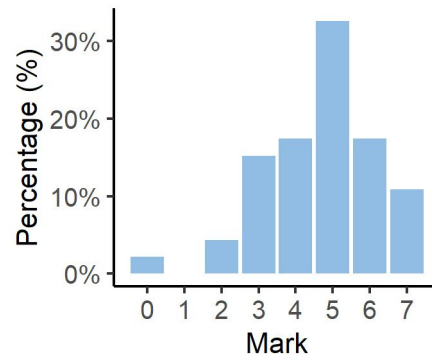
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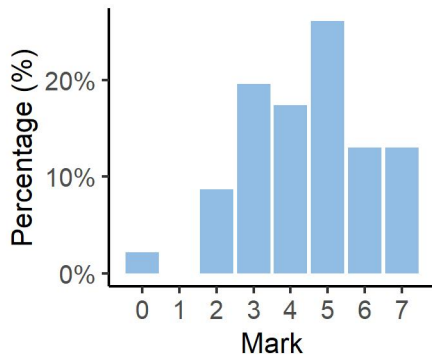
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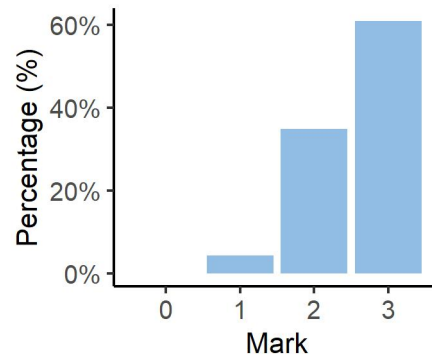
External assessment results
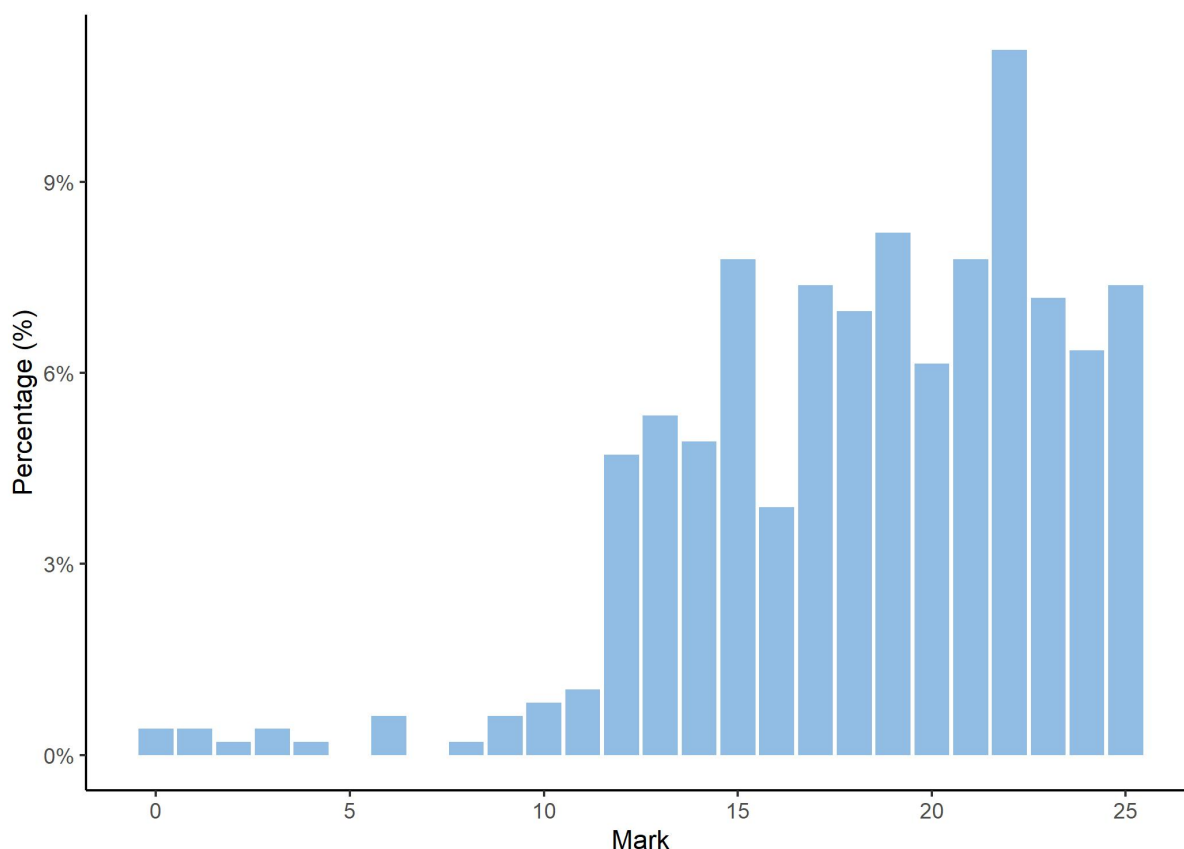
Final standards allocation

The number of students awarded each standard across the state are as follows.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	168	199	102	18	1

Grade boundaries

The grade boundaries are determined using a process to compare results on a numeric scale to the reporting standards.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Marks achieved	100–83	82–63	62–44	43–14	13–0

Internal assessment

The following information and advice pertain to the assessment design and assessment decisions for each IA in Units 3 and 4. These instruments have undergone quality assurance processes informed by the attributes of quality assessment (validity, accessibility and reliability).

Endorsement

Endorsement is the quality assurance process based on the attributes of validity and accessibility. These attributes are categorised further as priorities for assessment and each priority can be further broken down into assessment practices. Data presented in the assessment design sections identifies the reasons why IA instruments were not endorsed at Application 1, by the priority for assessments. An IA may have been identified more than once for a priority for assessment, e.g. it may have demonstrated a misalignment to both subject matter and to the assessment objective. Refer to the quality assurance tools for detailed information about the assessment practices for each assessment instrument.

Total number of items endorsed in Application 1

Number of items submitted each event	IA1	IA2	IA3
Total number of instruments	26	26	26
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	69	58	42

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. Teachers make judgments about the evidence in students' responses using the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) to indicate the alignment of students' work with performance-level descriptors and determine a mark for each criterion. These are provisional criterion marks. The QCAA makes the final decision about student results through the confirmation processes. Data presented in the assessment decisions section identifies the level of agreement between provisional and final results.

Number of samples reviewed at initial, supplementary and extraordinary review

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Supplementary samples requested	Extraordinary review	School review	Percentage agreement with provisional
1	26	140	46	30	0	94.67
2	22	152	52	0	0	95.83
3	4	19	0	0	0	97.28

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)

Examination — extended response (25%)

The IA1 requires students to analyse one contemporary ethical issue and propose an outcome or resolution. The proposed outcome or resolution is to be justified through an analysis and evaluation of two ethical theories. The contemporary issue to be analysed and the theories to be used are related to Unit 3 Topic 1: Moral philosophy. Theories to be used include two of the following: utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, or virtue ethics. Students are required to use unseen stimulus materials provided with the examination paper. These materials must come from information or texts that students have not previously been exposed to or used directly in class. The student response is to be written in the form of an analytical essay (Syllabus section 4.5.1).

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	5
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	1
Scope and scale	4

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- alignment to the IA1 specifications, in particular, the requirement that students use two theories of utilitarianism, Kantian ethics or virtue ethics, and provision of a contemporary issue that allowed for the application, analysis and evaluation of the two theories

- task directions that were succinct yet directed, by using the cognitive verbs of the assessment objectives and the ISMG descriptors. For example, inclusion of instructions to use the terminology of reason as well as moral philosophy, to construct an argument that proposes an outcome or resolution to the selected issue, and to evaluate the selected ethical theories using criteria.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include a contemporary ethical issue and associated stimulus that are able to be engaged with in the planning time

- avoid including meaningful stimulus in the 'Context' section, as such information cannot be used in the response to demonstrate use of stimulus in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

- use cognitive verbs that align in meaning to the explanations in the syllabus objectives and descriptors in the ISMG

- direct students to use both the terminology of moral philosophy and of reason (argumentation) in their response. This assists students to address the first two descriptors in the Defining, using and explaining criterion as well as the fourth descriptor in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

- direct students to engage in both lines of evaluation specified in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion. The second descriptor within the criterion addresses the evaluation of philosophical theories and views in moral philosophy (the two selected ethical theories), while the fourth descriptor addresses the evaluation of claims and arguments in moral philosophy

- incorporate a contemporary issue that presents an ethical dilemma that offers sufficient scope to meaningfully evaluate the application of both selected ethical theories. When the contemporary issue presented is such that the resolution is obvious and straightforward, it restricts students' ability to evaluate the selected theories to a degree that allows them to satisfy the upper performance levels of the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

- include stimulus material related to moral philosophy that allows students to interpret and explain theories at the mid and upper performance levels for descriptors in both the Defining, using and explaining criterion as well as the Interpreting and analysing criterion. This is aided by the use of primary sources for philosophical stimulus (e.g. quotes from Aristotle, Kant, Mill, Bentham) rather than secondary sources that essentially perform the interpretation and explanation.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	2
Language	2
Layout	1
Bias avoidance	0

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- the use of clear and appropriate language that directed students to their task without ambiguity or confusion

- a considered selection of stimulus referencing a contemporary ethical issue that did not alienate or otherwise adversely bias students

- evidence of being carefully proofread and peer-checked by featuring accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation and other relevant textual features.

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- provide clear instructions that use cues that align with the assessment objectives and the ISMG.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and final results

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	93.23	6.37	0.4
2	Interpreting and analysing	90.04	9.76	0.2
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	96.81	3.19	0
4	Creating and communicating	98.61	1	0.4

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA was most effective when:

- the ISMG was applied with careful attention to the qualifiers at each performance level. For example, for the Defining, using and explaining criterion, the upper performance level qualifier of 'detailed' was matched to those responses where explanations of ethical theories went beyond a mere restatement of each theory's central tenet

- for the Creating and communicating criterion, it was recognised that the first descriptor requires responses to elucidate a central thesis, that is, a statement that makes clear the claim or argument to be developed through the essay. The positing of a central thesis is a key feature of the analytical essay genre.

Samples of effective practices

The following are excerpts from responses that illustrate the characteristics for the criteria at the performance levels indicated. The samples may provide evidence of more than one criterion. The characteristics highlighted may not be the only time the characteristics have occurred throughout the response.

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Organising, synthesising and evaluating (6–7 marks)

This response demonstrates insightful and justified evaluation of philosophical theories and views in moral philosophy using well-chosen criteria.

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Although both arguments appear to be applicable to the scenario at face value due to their soundness, Kantian ethics presents flaws which detracts from its applicability; that the intentions of the principal in choosing a particular action is not perfectly clear. If the principal's intentions for supporting the students on strike is, as aforementioned, i.e to promote student engagement within the community and ultimately allow, in allowing them, care for and benefit students to build skills which are likely to prove beneficial in their future prospects for employment, the principal would be acting righteously from his sense of duty. However, if it is possible that he intended to let the students strike so that he would not have to take responsibility of for the students' wellbeing during school hours, which in this case he would violate the categorical be using the students as a means to his own benefit. As it is unclear the intent on which the principal makes a decision from is unclear, the soundness of the Kantian argument and thus its applicability to the scenario can not be definitely ascertained.

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Interpreting and analysing (6–7 marks)

This response demonstrates detailed and accurate deconstruction of relevant arguments relating to moral philosophy.

Organising, synthesising and evaluating (6–7 marks)

This response demonstrates coherent and thorough synthesis of ideas and information relating to moral philosophy in which all key aspects have been considered and resolved.

</td>
<td>

Utili Utilitarians argue that a moral act can be determined through an analysis of the consequences of possible actions. The utilitarian response could be as follows:

1. When choosing between a potential courses of action, one is morally obliged to choose the action which would result in the greatest net happiness.
2. Researchers and Those with authority over ethical standards in research must choose between all whether or not research using to use allow the use of mummified bodies in scientific research is moral.
3. Using modified Allowing the use of mummified bodies in research would result in the greatest net happiness.
∴ Those with authority over ethical standards in research are morally obliged to allow the use of mummified bodies in scientific research. (1,2,3).

This argument is valid, as the conclusion is guaranteed if the premises are true, however its soundness depends upon an

Where {, new paragraph

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analysis of the truth of the premises.{P1 is £ prima facie, likely (perhaps not as true, per se, but as an acceptable moral guideline)

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</tr>
</table>

| **Defining, using and explaining (7–8 marks)** This response demonstrates consistent and appropriate use of the terminology of reason and moral philosophy in relation to the issue. | In ~~the~~ contrast to utilitarianism, Kant's moral philosophy asserts that an act is moral if and only if it is performed out of a sense of duty. In addition to this necessary condition, the act must too be universalisable, a consequence of which is that no being with the capacity to reason

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(Which Kant defined as humans only) must be treated _merely_ as a means to an end. An application of this ~~argument~~ approach would be as follows: |

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG in this IA, it is recommended that:

- teachers note that the performance-level descriptors for the Defining, using and explaining criterion require the use of terminology of both moral philosophy and reason. The relevant terminology of reason is specified in the subject matter of Unit 3 Topic 1: Moral philosophy and Unit 1: Fundamentals of reason

- when making judgments for the Interpreting and analysing criterion, consideration is given to the deconstruction of relevant arguments, which is demonstrated when the explicit and tacit premises and conclusions of arguments are identified in responses. This is most evident when arguments are set out in standard argument form. With respect to the second descriptor, arguments are 'relevant' ('bearing upon or connected with the matter in hand') when they apply ethical theory to the provided contemporary issue stimulus. 'Accurate' ('precise and exact, free from error, correct in all details') deconstruction requires arguments to be set out using precise propositions, with their arrangement correctly demonstrating a logically valid inference pattern (e.g. modus ponens) if the claim is made in the response that the argument is, in fact, valid

- for the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, teachers note that the fourth descriptor references the use of criteria in the evaluation of claims and arguments. Criteria are explicitly listed in the subject matter of Unit 3 Topic 1, including *credibility*, *validity*, *soundness* and *strength*. In contrast, the second descriptor in the criterion references the evaluation of philosophical theories and views using criteria. These criteria are not explicitly specified, allowing scope for student responses to nominate, with justification, the criteria by which judgments are made. For example, in the context of the IA specifications, practicality and compatibility with human nature may prove appropriate criteria by which to evaluate theories and views in moral philosophy.

   The fifth descriptor within the criterion references the use of stimulus. This includes the capacity of students to integrate the moral problem presented in the stimulus with moral theory, which can be synthesised through the use of standard argument form.

Additional advice

The essay structure and reasoning features contained within the sample response on the QCAA Portal provide useful guidance as to the appropriate match of evidence in responses to the ISMG descriptors at the upper performance levels.

Internal assessment 2 (IA2)

Extended response — analytical essay (25%)

The IA2 requires students to interpret, analyse and evaluate philosophical arguments, ideas and information relating to a school of thought selected from the list provided in Unit 3 Topic 2: Philosophical schools of thought. Through this interpretation, analysis and evaluation, students are to arrive at a conclusion about the relevance of the philosophical school of thought to today's society. While some research may be undertaken, research is not the focus of this assessment. Therefore, the teacher must provide relevant stimulus material that assists the student to form their response. The student response is written in the form of an analytical essay (Syllabus section 4.5.2).

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	5
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	4

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- alignment to the IA2 specifications by containing task instructions that required students to arrive at a conclusion about the relevance of the selected philosophical school of thought to today's society

- tasks of suitable scope and scale that were achievable in the stipulated conditions of 1500–2000 words, through selection of a particular issue or focus through which the relevance of the selected philosophical school of thought was examined, e.g. the relevance of existentialism to contemporary discussions about gender equality

- task directions that used the cognitive verbs of the assessment objectives and the ISMG descriptors. For example, directions to use appropriate criteria to evaluate arguments related to the selected philosophical school of thought elicits responses that align to the descriptors in the Defining, using and explaining criterion and the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

- strategies that assisted students to develop unique responses within the prescribed length, including referencing requirements, checkpoints and teacher feedback on one draft.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- address the subject matter of Unit 3 Topic 2: Philosophical schools of thought rather than Unit 3 Topic 1: Moral philosophy or Unit 4 Topic 1: Rights. Schools that select consequentialism as their school of thought should design the task to avoid undue repetition of subject matter from Unit 3 Topic 1, for example, by shifting the focus from utilitarianism to another form of consequentialism, or a specific thinker or issue not encountered in Unit 3 Topic 1

- provide stimulus related to both the philosophical school of thought and the issue or focus to which the philosophy is being applied, sufficient to allow students to formulate a response. Ensure stimulus on the philosophical school of thought is of sufficient complexity to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate upper performance level descriptors across the Defining, using and explaining criterion and the Interpreting and analysing criterion

- require students to focus their response on one philosophical school of thought from the list provided in Unit 3 Topic 2, rather than two or more schools of thought. For example, a task that requires students to compare and contrast the relevance of stoicism and Buddhism (Eastern philosophy) does not align with the IA2 specifications. A selection of philosophical schools of thought from Unit 3 Topic 2 can be provided in the IA2 instrument.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	0
Language	3
Layout	0
Bias avoidance	0

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- the use of clear and appropriate language that directed students to their task without ambiguity or confusion

- an absence of bias and inappropriate content, including in the selection of stimulus

- a reader-friendly layout, incorporating clear labelling of stimulus items and the provision of stimulus text that was easily legible and appropriately referenced.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- be carefully proofread and peer-checked to ensure they model accurate spelling, grammar, punctuation and other relevant textual features. This applies to the correct representation of relevant thinkers' names, e.g. John Stuart Mill, Simone de Beauvoir.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and final results

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	95.05	4.95	0
2	Interpreting and analysing	93.02	6.98	0
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	95.72	3.38	0.9
4	Creating and communicating	99.55	0.23	0.23

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA was most effective when:

- the ISMG was applied with careful attention to the qualifiers at each performance level. For example, for the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, responses matched to the qualifiers *coherent* and *thorough* in the first descriptor at the top performance level typically demonstrated explicit responses to counter-arguments to the essay's central thesis.

Samples of effective practices

The following are excerpts from responses that illustrate the characteristics for the criteria at the performance levels indicated. The samples may provide evidence of more than one criterion. The characteristics highlighted may not be the only time the characteristics have occurred throughout the response.

Creating and communicating (3 marks) This response is succinct, with ideas and arguments related to the central thesis conveyed logically.	Social media is a modern implement that enables users to create, learn, share, or participate in social networking, solely from behind a screen. But, from this position, it is easy for one to portray their self as someone they are not in an attempt to conform to modern societal standards. French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) believed that masquerading as the 'perfect' person is an act of bad faith, and goes against the key idea of existentialism – the idea that rational beings are free agents; free to make their own choices, act in whatever manner they want, and to define their own meaning of life. Sartre states that one should live their life authentically and accept the responsibility that coincides with freedom. The standards that surround social media, however, makes it difficult to live authentically and thus, Sartre presents a compelling argument that soundly concludes that the creation of online identities is merely a modern mechanism for indulging in bad faith.

Defining, using and explaining (7–8 marks) This response demonstrates detailed descriptions and explanations of concepts, methods, principles and theories relating to the selected philosophical school of thought that are correct in all key aspects.	The crux of Sartre's philosophy lies in his arguments concerning the relation between existence and essence (Priest, 2000). There are, according to Sartre, three categories of existing things: artefacts, naturally occurring objects, and human beings. For an artefact, such as a ball or a shoe, the idea of the artefact is necessary for the existence of the artefact – that is, essence precedes existence. So, if a person writes a novel, then the idea of the novel must have predated the existence of the novel, for without the idea, the novel will cease to exist. In terms of naturally occurring objects, such as trees or flowers, essence and existence must coincide because their existence does not predate their essence, nor does essence predate their existence. Their being and their being what they are, are mutually dependent (Priest, 2000). But for humans, Sartre argues that existence precedes essence; there is no predetermined human essence and there is no human nature fixed in advance of human existence (Priest, 2000). As rational beings, if there is no predetermined human essence, then humans exert the subjective ability to choose the values and goals they want to live by. Human beings are "condemned to be free" because though one did not create themselves, they are nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment they exist, one is responsible for everything they do (Sarte, 1946). However, in Sartre's philosophy, awareness of this radical freedom leads to existential anxiety, or anguish.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG in this IA, it is recommended that:

- teachers note that for the Defining, using and explaining criterion the 'terminology of reason' constitutes part of the broader 'terminology of the selected school of thought' as specified in the subject matter of Unit 3 Topic 2. As well as demonstrating use of terminology in this criterion, explicit reference in responses to criteria such as *credibility*, *validity*, *soundness* and *strength* is evidence that also addresses the fourth descriptor in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

- consideration be given to the fact the IA2 is an extended response allowing for student responses up to 2000 words in length. This provides context when determining whether evidence in responses adequately matches upper-level performance descriptors requiring detail, for example, 'detailed descriptions and explanations … correct in all key aspects' (Criterion 1) and 'detailed and informed interpretation of significant ideas' (Criterion 2)

- teachers note that with respect to the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, the evaluation being assessed is two-fold. Firstly, the second descriptor 'evaluation of philosophical theories and views relating to the school of thought using well-chosen criteria' involves evaluation of theories connected to the school of thought. The criteria by which this is done should be evident in the student's response. Secondly, the fourth descriptor 'criteria used in evaluation of claims and arguments' references the evaluation of claims and arguments requiring use of reasoning criteria, e.g. *credibility*, *validity*, *soundness*, *strength.*

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)

Extended response — analytical essay (25%)

The IA3 requires students to interpret, analyse and evaluate philosophical arguments, ideas and information relating to one contemporary issue to which the concept of rights, as in Unit 4 Topic 1: Rights, must be applied. Through the interpretation, analysis and evaluation, the student is to arrive at a conclusion about the existence, source or status of a specific right or category of rights. While some research can be undertaken, research is not the focus of this assessment. Therefore, the teacher must provide relevant stimulus that assists students to form their response. The student response is written in the form of an analytical essay (Syllabus section 5.5.1).

Assessment design

Validity

Validity in assessment design considers the extent to which an assessment item accurately measures what it is intended to measure and that the evidence of student learning collected from an assessment can be legitimately used for the purpose specified in the syllabus.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — validity practices

Validity priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	12
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	4

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- alignment to the syllabus specifications, specifically through task instructions that required students to arrive at a conclusion about the *existence*, *source* or *status* of a selected right or category of rights

- the provision of stimulus related to both rights philosophy *and* a contemporary issue to which rights philosophy is capable of being applied. Topical examples included issues concerning the limits of any right to free expression, whether a right to civil disobedience exists, as well as inquiries into how to balance competing rights claims in a plural society, e.g. the individual right to privacy as against the collective right to security

- authentication strategies that assisted with both verifying authenticity of response and managing response length, e.g. the use of checkpoints, submission of one draft for teacher feedback, specifying referencing conventions.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- provide stimulus on rights philosophy and the selected contemporary issue of sufficient quantity to allow students to formulate a response

- provide stimulus on rights philosophy of sufficient complexity to provide students the opportunity to demonstrate the upper performance levels for the Defining, using and explaining criterion and the Interpreting and analysing criterion

- contain task instructions that direct students to address assessment objectives and characteristics within the ISMG, including instructions to use the terminology of reason and to use criteria in the evaluation of claims, arguments, and philosophical theories and views.

Accessibility

Accessibility in assessment design ensures that no student or group of students is disadvantaged in their capacity to access an assessment.

Reasons for non-endorsement by priority of assessment — accessibility practices

Accessibility priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Transparency	6
Language	1
Layout	0
Bias avoidance	1

*Total number of submissions: 26. Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that featured:

- a contemporary issue and associated stimulus that was engaging and age-appropriate

- a reader-friendly layout, incorporating clear labelling of stimulus items and the provision of stimulus text that was easily legible and appropriately referenced.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- frame tasks so the inquiry to be undertaken by students is precise and unambiguous. Language contained within the IA3 specifications requiring responses 'to arrive at a conclusion about the existence, source or status' of the selected right or category of rights is useful in this regard. Tasks can be articulated as either a question or command.

Assessment decisions

Reliability

Reliability is a judgment about the measurements of assessment. It refers to the extent to which the results of assessments are consistent, replicable and free from error.

Agreement trends between provisional and final results

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	95.65	4.35	0
2	Interpreting and analysing	100	0	0
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	93.48	6.52	0
4	Creating and communicating	100	0	0

Effective practices

Accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG for this IA was most effective when:

- careful attention was paid to the qualifiers at each performance level. Additionally, the 'best-fit' methodology was accurately applied to determine the correct numerical mark in each criterion.

Practices to strengthen

To further ensure accuracy and consistency of the application of the ISMG in this IA, it is recommended that:

- for the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, teachers note the upper performance-level descriptor of 'coherent and thorough synthesis of ideas and information' does not match responses where the reasoning contains a contradiction. For example, if a response claims a particular argument is strong, but also contains a fallacy, this is not coherent ('have an internally consistent relation of parts').

- teachers note that in the Defining, using and explaining criterion the 'terminology of reason' constitutes part of the broader terminology relating to rights as specified in the subject matter of Unit 4 Topic 1.

External assessment

Examination — extended response

Assessment design

Assessment specifications and conditions

Specifications

Students were required to compare and evaluate two political philosophies studied in Unit 4 Topic 2: Political philosophy. The focus of the comparison and evaluation was on the relationship between the philosophical assumptions of each theory and its conception of the ideal society. Students were required to use unseen stimulus materials provided with the examination paper. The student response was in the form of an analytical essay.

Conditions

- Time: 2 hours plus 15 minutes planning time

- Length: written, 800–1000 words

- No notes allowed.

The assessment instrument consisted of one extended response question. Questions were derived from the subject matter of Unit 4 Topic 2: Political philosophy. This assessment was used to determine student achievement in the following assessment objectives:

1. define and use terminology relating to political philosophy in order to demonstrate an understanding of meaning

2. explain concepts, methods, principles and theories relating to political philosophy

3. interpret and analyse arguments, ideas and information relating to political philosophy

4. organise and synthesise ideas and information to understand, engage with and construct arguments relating to political philosophy

5. evaluate claims and arguments inherent in theories and views relating to political philosophy

6. create an analytical essay response that communicates ideas and arguments relating to political philosophy.

In responding to the set question, students were required to select two out of four political philosophies listed and use one of two items of stimulus provided. Both items of stimulus were comprised of extracts from thinkers aligned to the nominated political philosophies. The intent of the stimulus was to elicit interpretation and evaluation of the tenets of those philosophies relevant to the concept of *equality*.

Assessment decisions

Overall, students responded well to the following assessment aspects:

- constructing argument on the extent to which it is legitimate for the state to aim for equality. Students who responded effectively to the assessment went beyond simply explaining their selected philosophies' conception of equality and constructed argument in support of a central thesis on which philosophy's conception of equality was preferable

- using relevant philosophical features in their responses, for example, providing an examination of argument by arranging premises and conclusions into standard argument form
- using relevant philosophical concepts, for example, evaluating the reasoning of arguments examined using criteria such as deductive validity and soundness, inductive strength, and credible, plausible or truthful premises.

Effective practices

The following samples were selected to illustrate highly effective student responses in some of the assessment objectives of the syllabus.

Extended response

Effective student responses:

- explained in detail the concept of equality as understood by their selected political philosophies
- used relevant terminology throughout
- established significant relationships within and between ideas and arguments connected to each political philosophy
- used relevant philosophical concepts and distinguishing features throughout
- provided a detailed examination of argument using relevant ideas
- identified premises accurately
- made clear links between premises and conclusions
- provided insightful evaluation of argument with reference to the selected stimulus
- used relevant criteria effectively to make a reasoned and justified decision about the legitimacy for the state to aim for equality in society
- constructed a logical argument on the extent to which it is legitimate for the state to aim for equality
- used relevant philosophical ideas effectively to support this argument
- conveyed ideas and arguments relating to the question succinctly, purposefully and fluently
- used the analytical essay genre, with paragraphs organised logically in relation to the central thesis.

Student samples of effective responses

Assessment objectives:

1. define and use terminology relating to political philosophy in order to demonstrate an understanding of meaning

2. explain concepts, methods, principles and theories relating to political philosophy

This excerpt has been included to:

- illustrate an effective explanation of the concept of equality as understood by the selected political philosophy (anarchism). The explanation is supported by the use of relevant terminology (e.g. 'self-sovereign', 'negative freedom', 'equal opportunity'), itself explained in other parts of the response. The extract demonstrates synthesis of ideas presented in the stimulus in the summarising of Bakunin's views in support of the explanation.

| This response:
• uses relevant terminology connected to the political philosophy throughout
• explains the concept of equality in the political philosophy | immense majority in subjection to them" This argument presents a very similar premise to Marx, but reaches a different conclusion on the best way to avoid exploitation. Bakunin asserts that by removing the state entirely, there is no authority that exploiters can look to in order to create policy advantageous to them. Rather all individuals are self-sovereigns and are equal through absolute negative freedom. Under anarchy, all have the fullest liberty to live as they choose and have equal opportunity to engage in the free market, which distributes resources. |

Assessment objective:

3. interpret and analyse argument, ideas and information relating to political philosophy

This excerpt has been included to:

- show a detailed examination of argument using relevant ideas, identifying premises accurately and making clear links between premises and conclusions. This has been achieved through using standard argument form to make explicit the fundamental tenets of libertarianism as it relates to the state's promotion of equality, the conceptual focus of the question. In deconstructing Nozick's argument, clear links to the stimulus are evident.

This response:	
• provides a detailed examination of argument using relevant ideas • identifies premises accurately • makes clear links between premises and conclusions	Above all, libertarianism values liberty. Specifically, negative freedoms – the freedom from constraint. Robert Nozick was a historically significant proponent of such. His argument is as follows: P1. An ideal government protects all its citizen's rights P2. The most important right is liberty (Stim 1) P3. Liberty is the exercise of an autonomous agent P4. An autonomous agent is best supported ~~without~~ by the absence of intervention C1. An ideal government does not intervene P5. Inequality is an inevitable result of... P.5... liberty P6. Enforcing equality is intervention FC .'. An ideal government does not enforce equality (Stim 1). Therefore, Nozick arrives at the conclusion that a libertarian Government cannot legitimately aim for equality. His argument is valid as the premises lead to the conclusion. The soundness of it, however, is contestable.

Assessment objective:

5. evaluate claims and arguments inherent in theories and views relating to political philosophy

This excerpt has been included to:

*   demonstrate insightful evaluation of argument. Following deconstruction of the libertarian argument into standard form, the strength of the argument is investigated through the examination of the truth or plausibility of each individual premise. The response uses example effectively to challenge the plausibility of one premise of the argument.

This response provides insightful evaluation of argument with reference to the selected stimulus.	The greatest flaw of libertarianism lies in P4, the assumption that a minimal state protects and maximises individual rights. A libertarian is able to accept this premise by disregarding positive freedom. Unlike negative freedom which is the freedom from outside constraints, positive freedom is an individual's ability to act on their wishes. For clarity, America's Emancipation Proclamation freed all slaves, removing ~~these extra~~ the external restrictions imposed by slavery. A libertarian would then argue all freed slaves, with ~~there~~ their negative freedom, will use their individual drive and dedication to advance in society. However, these freed individuals, without wealth and education to begin with, are significantly hindered. As opposed to those who have never suffered generational slavery and poverty. This is a lack of positive freedom that is overlooked by libertarianism which greatly detracts from the strength of this argument.

Assessment objective:

6. create an analytical essay response that communicates ideas and arguments relating to political philosophy

This excerpt has been included to:

- illustrate effective use of the analytical essay genre. In this introductory paragraph, statements describing what the essay will do have been eschewed in favour of positing an explicit central thesis that makes clear the argument to be developed throughout the response. The central thesis is also effective in nominating the evaluative criteria by which the response will prosecute its argument — that the preferable conception of equality is that which maximises needs satisfaction.

This response uses the analytical essay genre, with paragraphs organised logically in relation to the central thesis.	The stimulus provides two quotes on different interpretations of an ideal society. The first quote from Robert Nozick, shows a libertarians view, and the second quote, from John Rawls, shows a social democratic view. Both have contrasting ideologies views on how equality is made in a society. Libertarianism suggests that individualism and limited government is the key to equality, while social democracy suggests the equality of opportunity and redistribution of wealth is the key to equality in a society. This essay will argue that libertarianism is unfit to create equality as it does not cater to the needs of the majority. However, social democracy is a legitimate way for the state to aim for equality in society as it focuses on the balance of the needs of the many with the few while still maintaining a non-authoritarian regime.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that when preparing students for external assessment, teachers consider:

- teaching and learning opportunities focusing on defining and explaining the meaning of philosophical terminology. For example, when employing terminology such as 'formal equality', 'substantive equality' and 'equality of opportunity', effective student responses explained what these terms meant in the context of the political philosophy under analysis rather than using the term without clarification

- opportunities for students to establish relationships within and between ideas and arguments connected to the political philosophies. Effective responses were able to demonstrate how a political philosophy's conception of equality is related to assumptions concerning, for example, human nature, the meaning of freedom and the role of the state

- teaching and learning opportunities focusing on synthesising ideas and information presented in stimulus items. Students who responded effectively to the assessment actively analysed and evaluated the underlying premises and assumptions in arguments of thinkers represented in the stimulus, rather than merely explaining or referencing them

- assisting students identify and use relevant criteria in the evaluation of political philosophies. Frequently in responses students made judgments on the relative merits of certain philosophical ideas and positions, but lacked linking the judgment to a clearly identifiable criterion, e.g. requirements of a just society, promotion of well-being, compatibility with human nature, social cohesion

- assisting students demonstrate philosophical features within the analytical essay genre. This includes essays positing a central thesis that makes clear what position or claim the student will seek to establish; recognising and addressing counter-arguments; and supporting claims with relevant evidence, examples or deductions.

Senior External Examination

The following information relates to the Philosophy & Reason Senior External Examination, a standalone examination offered to eligible Year 12 students and adult learners. This commentary should be read in conjunction with the external assessment section of the preceding comments for the General subject.

> There were insufficient student enrolments in this subject to provide useful analytics.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well to the following assessment aspects:

- the explanation of relevant concepts, principles and theories referenced in questions across SEE 1 and SEE 2

- the creation of responses that communicated meaning to suit purpose, i.e. conveying ideas and arguments using their understanding of philosophical concepts, principles and theories.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that when preparing for the assessment for the Senior External Examination consideration be given to:

- teaching and learning opportunities focusing on the interpretation and analysis of arguments through arranging premises and conclusions into standard argument form

- assisting students identify and use relevant criteria in the evaluation of claims and arguments inherent in philosophical theories, views and ideas

- consulting resources on the Philosophy & Reason SEE syllabus page on the QCAA Portal. The IA1 and IA2 high-level annotated sample responses assist to prepare students for SEE 1 Sections 1 and 2 respectively. The IA3 high-level annotated sample response assists to prepare students for SEE 2 Paper 1, and the mock and sample external assessments are helpful in preparing students for SEE 2 Paper 2.

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