Philosophy & Reason subject report

2022 cohort

February 2023

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Contents

Introduction

Throughout 2022, schools and the QCAA worked together to further consolidate the new Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) system. The familiar challenges of flood disruption and pandemic restrictions were managed, and the system continued to mature regardless.

We have now accumulated three years of assessment information, and our growing experience of the new system is helping us to deliver more authentic learning experiences for students. An independent evaluation will commence in 2023 so that we can better understand how well the system is achieving its goals and, as required, make strategic improvements. The subject reports are a good example of what is available for the evaluators to use in their research.

This report analyses the summative assessment cycle for the past year — from endorsing internal assessment instruments to confirming internal assessment marks, and marking external assessment. It also gives readers information about:

- how schools have applied syllabus objectives in the design and marking of internal assessments
- how syllabus objectives have been applied in the marking of external assessments
- patterns of student achievement.

The report promotes continuous improvement by:

- identifying effective practices in the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessments
- recommending where and how to enhance the design and marking of valid, accessible and reliable assessment instruments
- providing examples, including those that demonstrate best practice.

Schools are encouraged to reflect on the effective practices identified for each assessment, consider the recommendations to strengthen assessment design and explore the authentic student work samples provided.

Audience and use

This report should be read by school leaders, subject leaders and teachers to:

- inform teaching and learning and assessment preparation
- assist in assessment design practice
- assist in making assessment decisions
- help prepare students for external assessment.

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

Report preparation

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

Subject data summary
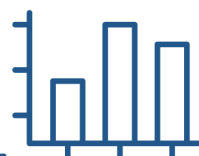
Subject completion

The following data includes students who completed the General subject or AS.

Note: All data is correct as at 31 January 2023. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered the subject: 31.

Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	661	627	572

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Unit 1	614	47
Unit 2	598	29

Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA
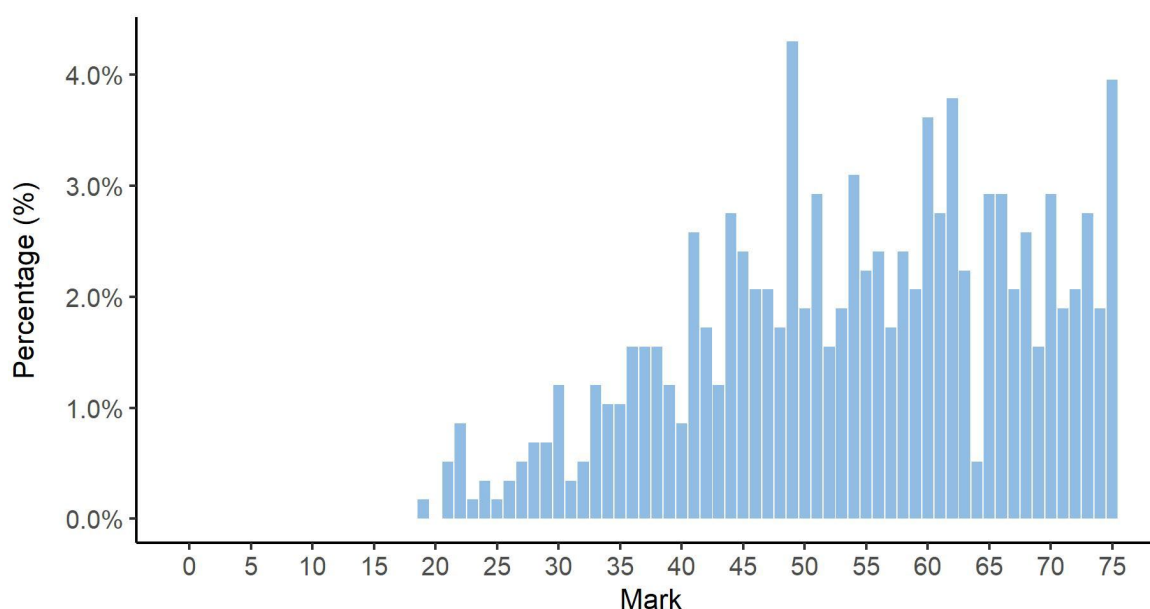
IA1 marks

IA1 total
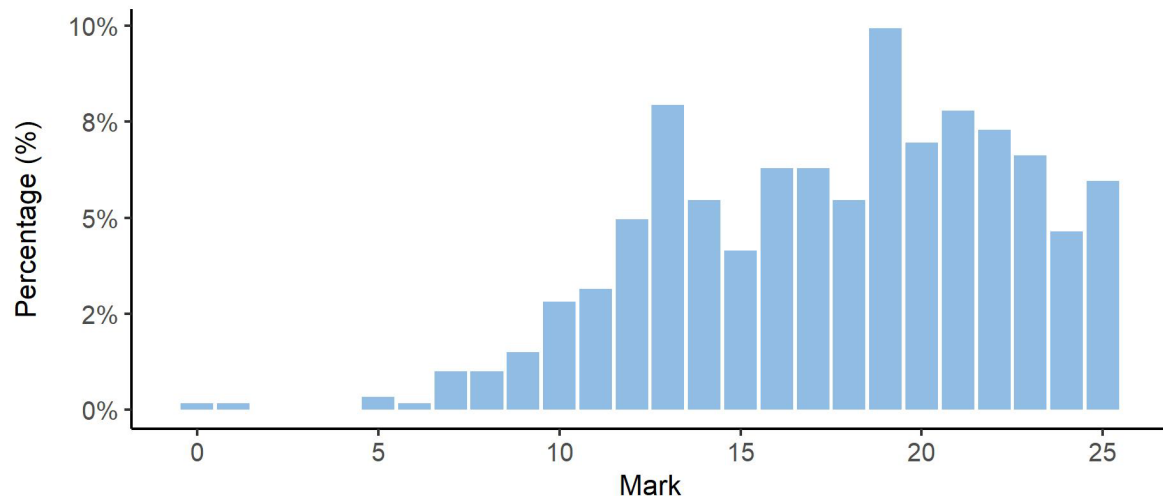
IA1 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining
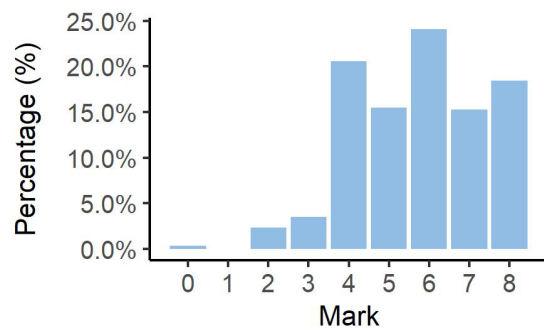
IA1 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing
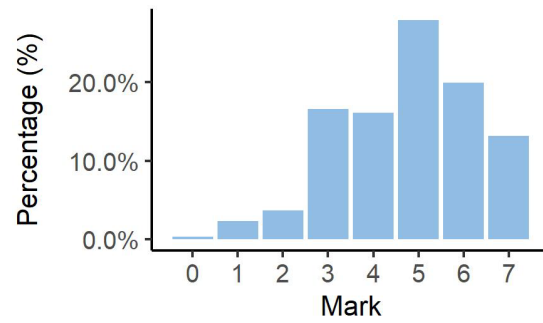
IA1 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating
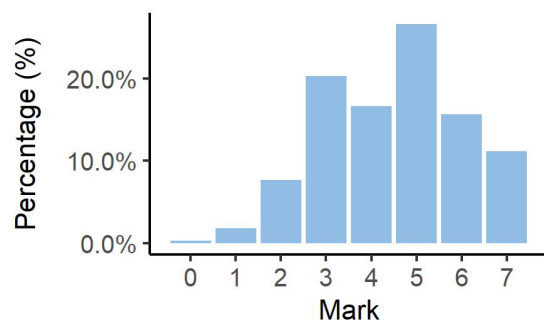
IA1 Criterion: Creating and communicating
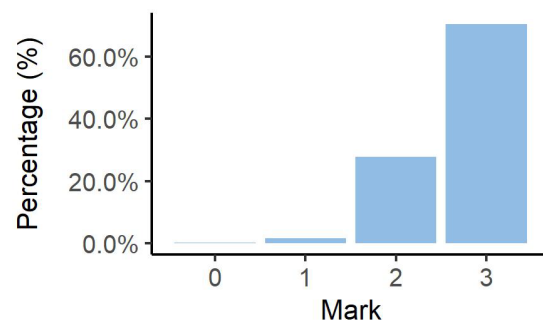
IA2 marks

IA2 total
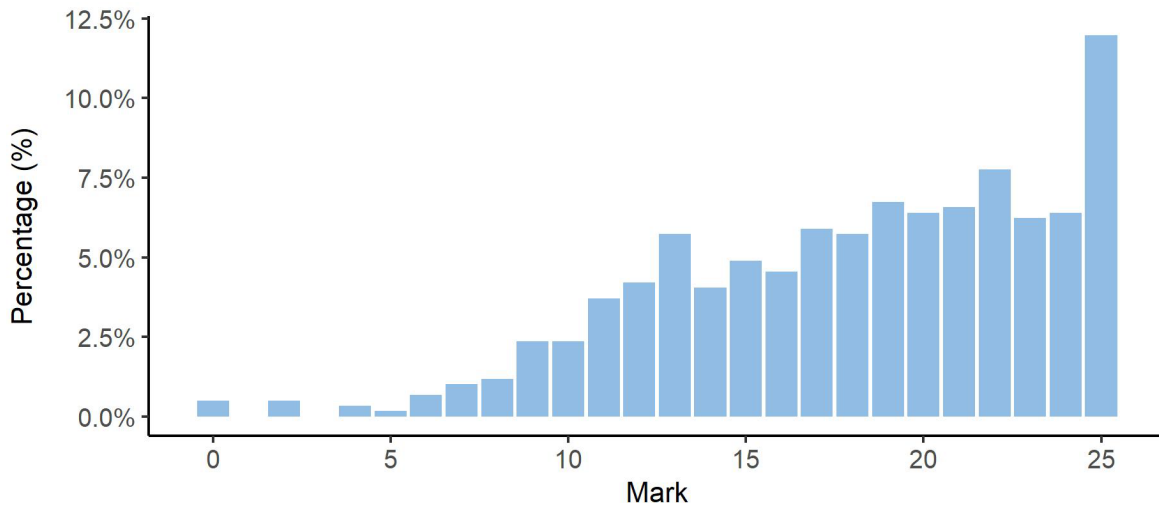
IA2 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining
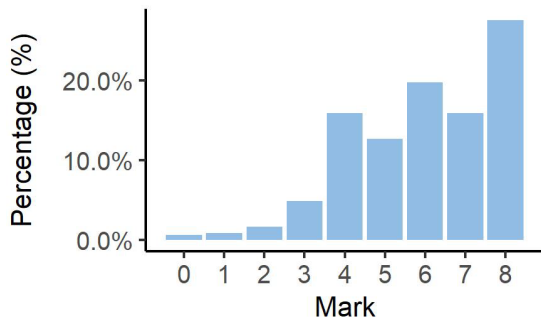
IA2 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing
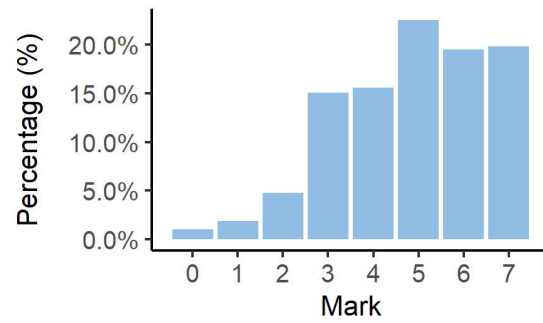
IA2 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating
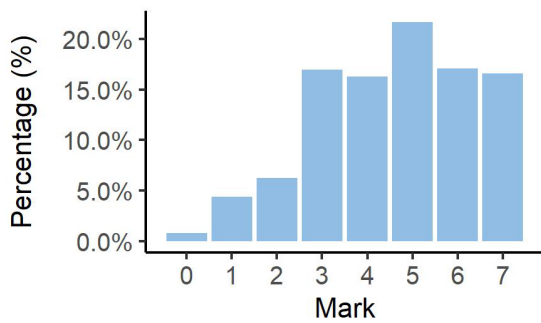
IA2 Criterion: Creating and communicating
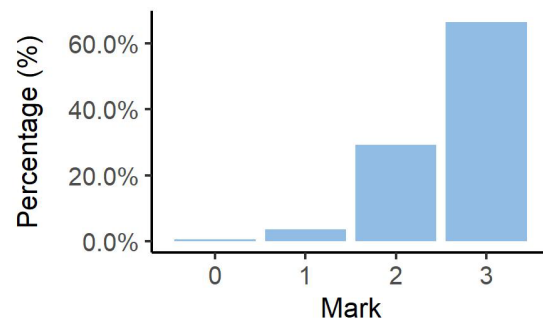
IA3 marks

IA3 total
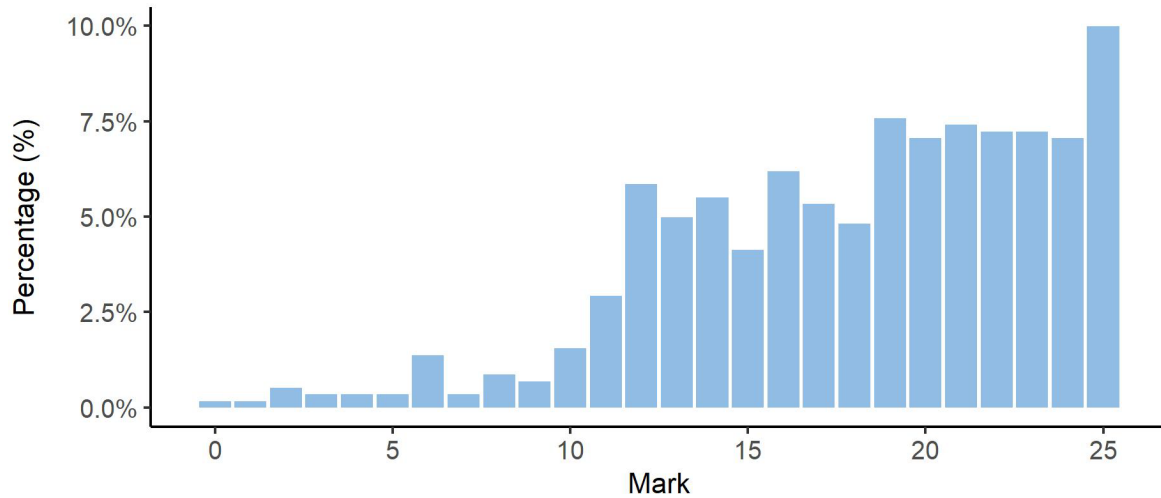
IA3 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining
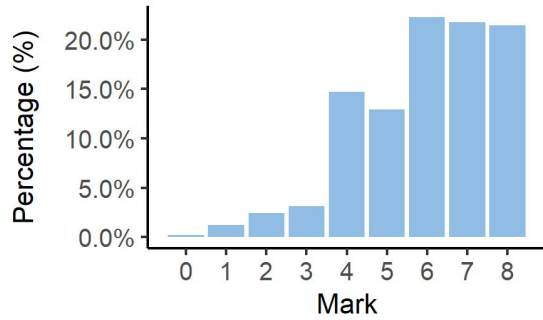
IA3 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing
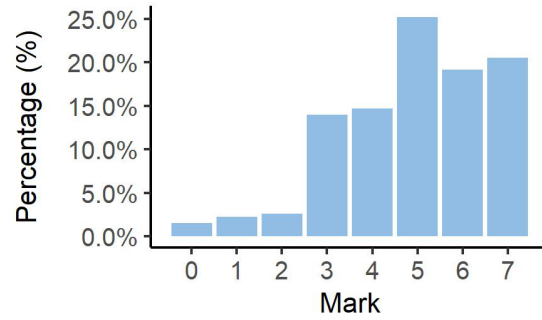
IA3 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating
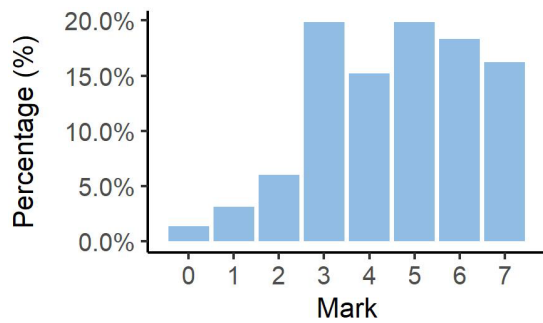
IA3 Criterion: Creating and communicating
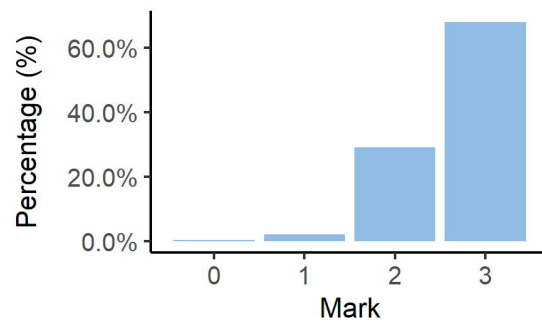
External assessment (EA) marks
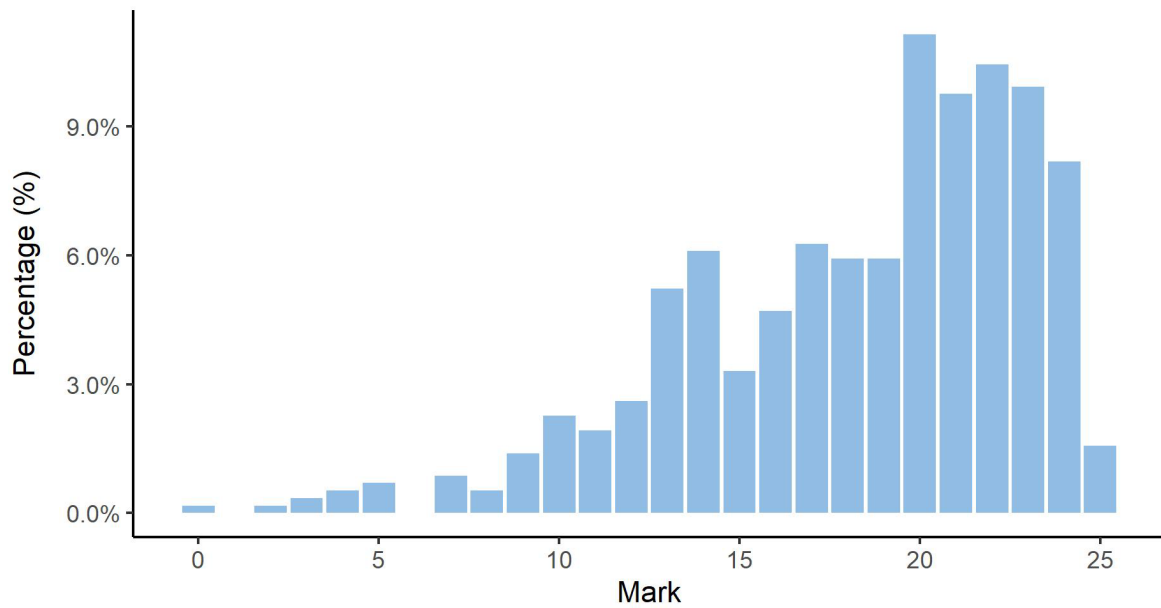
Final subject results

Final marks for IA and EA
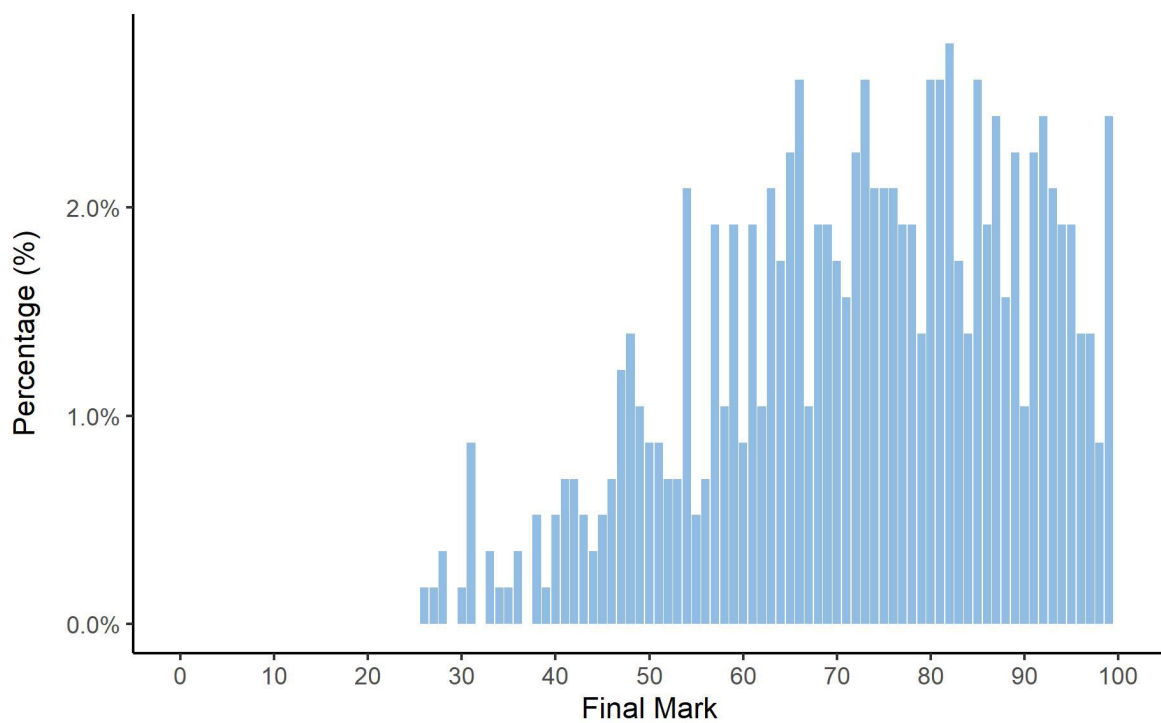
Grade boundaries

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	62–42	41–17	16–0

Distribution of standards

The number of students who achieved each standard across the state is as follows.

Standard	A	B	C	D	E
Number of students	186	236	123	27	0

Internal assessment

The following information and advice relate 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 section 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 the subject matter and the assessment objective/s.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v4.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Number of instruments submitted	IA1	IA2	IA3
Total number of instruments	31	31	31
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	48%	45%	64%

Confirmation

Confirmation is the quality assurance process based on the attribute of reliability. The QCAA uses provisional criterion marks determined by teachers to identify the samples of student responses that schools are required to submit for confirmation.

Confirmation samples are representative of the school's decisions about the quality of student work in relation to the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG), and are used to make decisions about the cohort's results.

Refer to *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v4.0*, Section 9.6.

The following table includes the percentage agreement between the provisional marks and confirmed marks by assessment instrument. The Assessment decisions section of this report for each assessment instrument identifies the agreement trends between provisional and confirmed marks by criterion.

Number of samples reviewed and percentage agreement

A	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	31	201	60	70.97%
2	31	196	36	77.42%
3	31	195	17	70.97%

Internal assessment 1 (IA1)

Examination — extended response (25%)

The examination assesses the application of a range of cognitions to a provided problem, question or hypothesis.

Student responses must be completed individually, under supervised conditions, and in a set timeframe.

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 priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	11
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	3
Scope and scale	5

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- stipulated two ethical theories from utilitarianism, Kantian ethics and virtue ethics. Where the instrument listed all three ethical theories and instructed students to select two, stimulus related to the moral philosophy of all three theories was provided
- used quotes or brief extracts from philosophers (e.g. Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, Mill) as the moral philosophy stimulus
- provided stimulus on the contemporary issue or dilemma of sufficient substance that would allow students to interpret and analyse information. Stimulus of a visual form (e.g. cartoons, diagrams) was only included if it provided a meaningful contribution to the stimulus package.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include clear instructions for students to use both the terminology of reason and moral philosophy in their response to align with ISMG descriptors

- avoid including extracts from secondary texts as moral philosophy stimulus, as such extracts inhibit students' ability to demonstrate the descriptors for themselves in the Defining, using and explaining criterion and the Interpreting and analysing criterion

- select a contemporary ethical issue or dilemma of a kind that allows students to readily apply principles of the selected ethical theories and evaluate their effectiveness in determining a resolution, thereby giving students the opportunity to demonstrate all performance-level descriptors in the ISMG

- include instructions for students to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of each selected ethical theory in determining an outcome

- seek to use virtue ethics as one of the three ethical theories available as an option under the assessment specifications. Repetition each year of the same two ethical theories leads to predictability, weakening the reliability of the assessment.

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

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- included clear instructions on the thinking to be demonstrated in the response through the inclusion of cues that used the cognitive language of the assessment objectives and ISMG descriptors

- stated the task instructions clearly in the Task section of the instrument rather than in the Context or Stimulus sections.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

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 confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	74.19%	25.81%	0%	0%
2	Interpreting and analysing	70.97%	29.03%	0%	0%
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	80.65%	19.35%	0%	0%
4	Creating and communicating	100%	0%	0%	0%

Effective practices

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

- matching evidence to the Creating and communicating criterion across all performance levels
- in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, judgments
  - distinguished between *justification* and an assertion
  - recognised that a response that contains internal contradictions better matches to synthesis descriptors at the mid to lower performance levels.

Samples of effective practices

The following excerpt illustrates an appropriate match of evidence to the Interpreting and analysing criterion, where the deconstructed argument presented is *detailed and accurate*.

Part of the interpretation of utilitarian theory is demonstrated through its direct application to the given problem, synthesised via standard argument form, thereby establishing the argument's *relevance*.

The deconstruction is *accurate* given the appropriate demonstration of correct inferential connections between premises and conclusions (adopting a modus ponens form), and the premises and conclusion correctly represent the ideas under analysis.

The identification of a key tenet of utilitarianism in premise 1 provides a platform for the subsequent evaluation of the theory, with the formulation of premise 2 and the conclusion allowing for critique of the theory's effectiveness in determining an outcome, which occurs later in the essay.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

The following standard form argument presents the Utilitarian approach to the ~~HeLa cell~~ issue:

1. An action is morally praiseworthy if it creates the greatest net utility.
2. Continuing the use of HeLa cells and derived products/procedures creates the greatest net utility.
∴ Continuing the use of HeLa cells and derived products/procedures is a morally praiseworthy action.

This deductive argument is valid, however its soundness is questionable.

The first, a direct statement of Utilitarian theory, premise, appears plausible prima facie; ~~its~~ many people believe the purpose of human life is happiness, & spend their lives seeking it. However, ~~this idea can be questioned.~~ ~~Other~~ other qualities could be more or equally as ~~way~~ important as happiness ~~in regards to human nature~~. The Nozick pleasure machine thought experiment proved that, if provided with a hypothetical opportunity to spend the rest of their lives in unconditional, pain-free happiness, many people would refuse ~~reject~~ ~~this~~, due to the pleasure machine's removal of other, deeper meanings, ~~such as~~ such as humanity, rationality, and growth. This suggests pleasure may not be, or may not be the only, fundament of human nature.

Practices to strengthen

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

- in the Defining, using and explaining criterion
  - terminology relating to both moral philosophy and reasoning must be used discerningly and precisely to match descriptors of *consistent* and *appropriate* use of terminology evidencing an *astute* understanding of meaning

- – *detailed* descriptions and explanations of concepts, principles and theories must extend beyond a repetition of information provided in the stimulus material

    - – to match the highest performance level qualifier of *correct in all key* aspects, explanations need to be precise and accurate

- in the Interpreting and analysing criterion

    - – a *detailed and informed* interpretation of significant ideas and information must go beyond what is provided in the stimulus and be demonstrated by applying the ideas to the given ethical issue

    - – an *accurate* deconstruction of relevant arguments relating to moral philosophy requires demonstration of correct inferential connections between premises and conclusions. For example, if validity is being claimed, the deconstructed argument demonstrates validity through the appropriate organisation of its propositions

- in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion

    - – *insightful and justified* evaluation is demonstrated by evaluating the relevant ethical theories in the context of their application to the selected issue. Providing a critique of the theories without contextualisation results in a recall of criticisms instead of actual evaluation

    - – the second descriptor requires an *evaluation of philosophical theories and views in moral philosophy* and not simply the attainment of an outcome or resolution to the given ethical issue. In this respect, the evaluative focus of responses should be on the effectiveness of the relevant theories in determining a resolution to the ethical issue.

Additional advice

- Any scaffolding or instructions provided when preparing students to undertake the IA1 task should not lead to a predetermined response or interfere with the task's integrity to allow students to demonstrate their own thoughts and ideas.

- The *determination of relationships* in the Interpreting and analysing criterion is aided by demonstrating in responses how various aspects of theories, including their underlying assumptions, relate to each other. For example, how differences in view as to what contains intrinsic value leads to fundamental differences in approach between Kant and the utilitarians.

- The terminology of reason, as listed in Unit 1, provides technical language and concepts that underpin the discourse of philosophy. This language is relevant when constructing and presenting an overall position to the IA1 question. Reasoning terminology that is not purposeful can hinder succinctness (Creating and communicating criterion) and the synthesis of ideas and information relating to moral philosophy (Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion).

- Responses should acknowledge the perspective from which an argument is being advanced when synthesising via standard form deconstruction the application of ethical theory to the issue provided on the IA1 task. For example, see the Philosophy & Reason IA1 High-level annotated response in the QCAA Portal. Identifying the perspective from which an argument is being advanced can assist students to distinguish their own views and claims from the views and claims of other perspectives presented in their response.

Internal assessment 2 (IA2)

Extended response — analytical essay (25%)

This assessment focuses on the interpretation, analysis, examination and/or evaluation of ideas and information. It is an open-ended task responding to a particular situation or stimulus materials. While students may undertake some research when writing the extended response, it is not the focus of this technique.

This assessment occurs over an extended and defined period of time. Students may use class time and their own time to develop a response.

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 priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	8
Authentication	0
Authenticity	1
Item construction	2
Scope and scale	7

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- contained task instructions that required students to arrive at a conclusion about the relevance of the selected philosophical school of thought to today's society, contextualised by focusing on a specific societal issue, e.g. the relevance of feminist philosophy to debates concerning legislated gender quotas; the relevance of consequentialism to issues of global inequality and wealth distribution

- framed the task to provide a suitable scope and scale of inquiry, so that the full range of ISMG performance-level descriptors could be satisfied in the stipulated conditions of 1500–2000 words

- provided stimulus related to both the philosophical school of thought and the contextualising issue sufficient to allow students to formulate a response

- required 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
- featured strategies that assisted students to develop authentic responses within the prescribed conditions, including referencing requirements, checkpoints and teacher feedback on one draft only.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- include a direction for students to use the terminology and conventions of logical argumentation (i.e. Unit 1: Fundamentals of reason) in their response to align with ISMG descriptors, e.g. to use relevant criteria in the evaluation of claims and arguments
- include as stimulus at least some primary source material produced by thinkers of the selected school of thought, sufficient to allow students to demonstrate their capacity to interpret and explain at the upper performance levels of the Defining, using and explaining criterion and the Interpreting and analysing criterion
- avoid repetition of subject matter from Unit 3 Topic 1: Moral philosophy where consequentialism is the selected philosophical school of thought. This can be achieved by shifting the focus from utilitarianism to another form of consequentialism or a specific consequentialist thinker not encountered by students in Unit 3 Topic 1: Moral philosophy
- use scaffolding that allows students to demonstrate for themselves the cognitions within the ISMG performance-level descriptors, rather than constructing a predetermined response.

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 priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Bias avoidance	0
Language	3
Layout	3
Transparency	2

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- included clear instructions on the thinking to be demonstrated in the response through the inclusion of cues that used the cognitive language of the assessment objectives and ISMG descriptors
- featured a user-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:

- offer contextualising issues or contexts that are inclusive for all students

- do not contain substantive material in the Context section, as it precludes the use of such material in responses from forming evidence in satisfaction of the 'use of stimulus' descriptor for the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion.

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 confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	83.87%	12.9%	3.23%	0%
2	Interpreting and analysing	87.1%	12.9%	0%	0%
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	83.87%	12.9%	3.23%	0%
4	Creating and communicating	90.32%	3.23%	6.45%	0%

Effective practices

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

- judgments across all criteria were based on students' engagement with the selected philosophical school of thought rather than the social issue presented in the IA2 task. The social issue provides the context through which the selected philosophical school of thought was analysed and evaluated

- in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, judgments

  - concerning the synthesis of ideas and information relating to the selected philosophical school of thought were appropriately matched to descriptors requiring key aspects to be *considered and resolved* when the response explicitly recognised and addressed counterarguments to the essay's central thesis

  - on the evaluation of philosophical theories and views were based on how well the contestable claims in the selected philosophical school of thought were critiqued in responses, rather than simply how well the philosophy applied to the selected issue.

Samples of effective practices

The following excerpt illustrates an appropriate match of evidence to descriptors within two criteria.

Determination of relevant and significant relationships within and between ideas, arguments and theories of the philosophical school of thought (Interpreting and analysing criterion) is demonstrated throughout the response in the sustained analysis and comparison of arguments from Peter Singer and Martha Nussbaum. This is typified in the concluding passage below that highlights the response's consideration of how ideas in both arguments relate to each other.

Consistent and appropriate use of terminology demonstrating astute understanding of meaning (Defining, using and explaining criterion) is evidenced through the correct use of reasoning criteria to evaluate arguments and premises, e.g. use of validity, soundness and plausibility.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

Nussbaum's argument is valid, and both of its premises are plausible. As a result, it is sound. The capabilities approach at the heart of this argument avoids many of the issues present in Utilitarian solutions, including Singer's. It is comprehensive, placing importance on each being regardless of its qualities and attempting to ensure that every creature leads a satisfying existence (based on the requirements of its species) (Nussbaum, 2006). This prevents the exclusion of some beings from the right to equality of consideration (a flaw of Singer's argument). Removing the concept of aggregation also eliminates the internal issues associated with unclear quantities and calculations, where immoral actions and mistreatment may be justified if enough pleasure arises as a result. Nussbaum's capabilities solution thus provides a solid framework for animal rights activism which falls in line with common morality.

Singer's argument is valid, but its first premise is not plausible, and as a result his argument as a whole is unsound. It also falls victim to shortcomings inherent to Utilitarianism, thus resulting in internal flaws. Nussbaum's argument, on the other hand, is both valid and possesses plausible premises, rendering it sound. It also provides a more comprehensive and morally satisfying approach to animal rights and welfare. With this in mind, though Singer's contributions are valuable, Nussbaum's capabilities approach is preferable.

Practices to strengthen

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

- responses engage with and process ideas and information presented in philosophical stimulus material rather than simply summarise or repeat information. This factor is important when differentiating between performance levels in the Defining, using and explaining and the Interpreting and analysing criteria

- in the Defining, using and explaining criterion, the terminology of the selected school of thought incorporates the terminology of reasoning as specified in the subject matter of Unit 3 Topic 2. *Consistent and appropriate* use of terminology demonstrating *astute* understanding of meaning at the highest performance level requires terminology use to be discerning and precise

- in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, *arguments relating to the philosophical school of thought* refers to arguments made across the totality of the essay in response to the set question. To satisfy descriptors at the mid to upper performance levels, arguments must be *justified* rather than rely on a simple assertion of claims. Justification can be through credible reasoning (e.g. analogous reasoning, use of thought experiment) and the provision of evidence.

Additional advice

- Any scaffolding or instructions provided when preparing students to undertake the IA2 task should not lead to a predetermined response or interfere with students' abilities to demonstrate their own capacity to think and respond.

- In the Interpreting and analysing criterion

  – there is no explicit requirement for students to deconstruct arguments into syllogisms (i.e. as attempts at valid deductions) where the context does not require it. Should it suit the context of the response, arguments can be deconstructed and assessed as inductive in form

  – the *determination* of relationships within and between ideas, arguments and theories of the selected philosophical school of thought requires students to interrogate how various aspects of theories interlink and cohere. In the context of the IA2, this characteristic can also be demonstrated by explicitly comparing and contrasting the views of various proponents within a philosophical school of thought.

- In the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, the provision of justification for arguments is enhanced when language used to express claims is proportionate to the strength of justification offered. Care should be taken when using high modality language in responses as the stronger the modality used when stating a claim, the greater the strength of reasoning or evidence is required in justification.

- The IA2 specifications state responses are to be written in the form of an analytical essay, with the Creating and communicating criterion requiring adherence to genre conventions. Analytical essays are comprised of connected prose. If used, subheadings within an essay should be used to organise ideas within the essay rather than merely signpost the cognition being demonstrated. Academic integrity requires any subheadings used to be formulated by the student (see *QCE and QCIA policy and procedures handbook v.4.0*, Section 8.1)..

Internal assessment 3 (IA3)

Extended response — analytical essay (25%)

This assessment focuses on the interpretation, analysis, examination and/or evaluation of ideas and information. It is an open-ended task responding to a particular situation or stimulus materials. While students may undertake some research when writing the extended response, it is not the focus of this technique.

This assessment occurs over an extended and defined period of time. Students may use class time and their own time to develop a response.

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 priority	Number of times priority was identified in decisions*
Alignment	9
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	1
Scope and scale	1

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- selected a right or category of rights for inquiry that students could discuss the existence, source or status of in the context of an applicable contemporary issue, e.g. the scope of environmental rights in the context of possible actions to address climate change; the existence of a right to access reproductive health care in the context of its restriction by democratic means

- instructed students to arrive at a conclusion about the existence, source or status of the selected right or category of rights

- utilised the suggested issues stipulated in the syllabus subject matter of Unit 4 Topic 1: Rights (see Syllabus section 5.3, under 'generate questions and theses regarding issues such as …')

- included stimulus for both the selected contemporary issue and the rights philosophy of sufficient quantity to allow students to formulate a response, and of sufficient complexity to provide the opportunity to demonstrate all performance-level descriptors across the ISMG.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- avoid including stimulus that provides students with a response, e.g. an article that draws a conclusion about the existence, source or status of a right following the application of philosophical considerations to the selected contemporary issue

- include a direction for students to use the terminology and conventions of logical argumentation (i.e. Unit 1: Fundamentals of reason) in their response to align with ISMG descriptors, e.g. to use relevant criteria in the evaluation of claims and arguments

- use scaffolding that allows students to demonstrate for themselves the cognitions within the ISMG performance-level descriptors, rather than constructing a predetermined response.

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

*Each priority might contain up to four assessment practices.

Total number of submissions: 31.

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- formulated tasks so that the inquiry to be undertaken was precise and unambiguous, requiring students to arrive at a conclusion about the existence, source or status of a selected right or category of rights. The inquiry was clearly stipulated in the Task section of the instrument, rather than in the Context or Stimulus sections

- incorporated a contemporary issue and associated stimulus materials that were engaging and age-appropriate

- included instructional cues, using the cognitive language of the assessment specifications, objectives and ISMG that highlighted for students the thinking that they needed to demonstrate in their response.

Practices to strengthen

There were no significant issues identified for improvement.

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 confirmed marks

Criterion number	Criterion name	Percentage agreement with provisional	Percentage less than provisional	Percentage greater than provisional	Percentage both less and greater than provisional
1	Defining, using and explaining	77.42%	22.58%	0%	0%
2	Interpreting and analysing	80.65%	16.13%	3.23%	0%
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	83.87%	12.9%	3.23%	0%
4	Creating and communicating	93.55%	3.23%	3.23%	0%

Effective practices

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

- matching evidence to the Creating and communicating criterion across all performance levels

- in the Interpreting and analysing criterion, judgments made concerning the determination of relationships within and between ideas, arguments and theories on rights were based on explicit evidence in responses of links being made between the components of a theory/thinker's views, or across theories/thinkers' views

- in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, judgments recognised

  - that the criteria used in the evaluation of claims and arguments regarding rights referenced evaluative concepts from Unit 1: Fundamentals of reason

  - *insightful and justified* evaluation of philosophical theories and views relating to rights required the evaluative points to demonstrate an understanding of complexity. A statement of an opposing claim with no further justification was better matched to evaluation at the lower performance levels

  - an *effective, thoroughly justified* argument was one that both recognised and addressed potential weaknesses and counterarguments to a central thesis. Doing so provided evidence of the synthesis of ideas in which all key aspects had been considered and resolved.

Samples of effective practices

The following extract illustrates an appropriate match of evidence in the Defining, using and explaining criterion, focusing on the detailed descriptions and explanations of concepts, methods, principles and theories relating to rights that are correct in all key aspects.

John Rawls's ideas and theory relevant to the inquiry being undertaken are succinctly unpacked and summarised. Points made in the summary are subsequently expanded upon later in the response, evidencing detail in the explanations.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

> To determine whether civil disobedience is justifiable in a democratic regime, Rawls proposed the concept of a nearly just society where everything was fair, however, certain forms of injustice would still occur. He recognised that civil disobedience results from a conflict of duties when citizens acknowledge the legitimacy of the constitution. This is when individuals begin questioning to what extent they are obliged to obey the government in unjust situations which inflict upon their legal rights (Rawls, 1999). A social contract is an agreement between an individual and a society, requiring both entities to exchange something of value with one another. This is commonly a negotiation of
>
> an individual's rights and the state's authority (Duignan, 2021). Rawls claimed that a just government is one that any individual would agree to from a fair and impartial perspective. Likewise, he designed the 'veil of ignorance' thought experiment where everyone must imagine themselves in a position, unaware of their status or identity in society. Eliminating personal biases and prejudices, this method hypothesises the governing principles of a nearly just society. His definition of a just social contract was one that any rational human being would sign to in an 'original position'. In this original position, Rawls believed that people would choose two principles: (1) each citizen has access to equal rights and (2) inequality should benefit the most disadvantaged by incentivising certain choices or the creation of wealth and maximising redistribution of wealth without losing incentive. Behind a veil of ignorance, people are rational beings who ensure equality is maintained within society to protect themselves from injustice (D'Agostino, 2019).

Practices to strengthen

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

- the interpretation, explanation and evaluation of philosophical ideas and theories are required to focus on rights, rather than the selected contemporary issue. The role of the contemporary issue is to provide a context through which to engage with philosophy relating to rights

- in the Defining, using and explaining criterion

  - the terminology of rights incorporates the terminology of reasoning (see Unit 4 Topic 1 subject matter). *Consistent and appropriate* use of terminology demonstrating *astute* understanding of meaning at the highest performance level requires terminology use to be discerning

  - descriptions and explanations of concepts and theories relating to rights must be *detailed* and correct *in all key aspects* to be matched to the highest performance level. This requires all relevant and salient aspects of selected theories to be addressed, including the underlying assumptions of, and provided justification for, such theories

- in the Interpreting and analysing criterion, *accurate* deconstruction of relevant arguments relating to rights requires demonstration of correct inferential connections between premises and conclusions, e.g. if validity is being claimed, the deconstructed argument demonstrates validity through the appropriate organisation of its propositions.

Additional advice

- Any scaffolding or instructions provided when preparing students to undertake the IA3 task should not lead to a predetermined response or interfere with students' abilities to demonstrate their own capacity to think and respond.

- In the Interpreting and analysing criterion, there is no explicit requirement for students to deconstruct arguments into syllogisms (i.e. as attempts at valid deductions) should the context not require it. Should it suit the context of the response, arguments can be deconstructed and assessed as inductive in form.

- While the topic of rights has a close connection to issues of law, responses must focus on inquiring into *philosophical* arguments concerning the existence, source or status of a specific right or category of rights. For instance, assumptions made that the provision of a right in a legal instrument (e.g. a statute or international convention) constitutes self-evident legitimacy of the right does not, in of itself, constitute *justified* evaluation of philosophical theories and views nor a *justified* argument relating to rights. Both points are relevant to the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion.

External assessment

External assessment (EA) is developed and marked by the QCAA. The external assessment for a subject is common to all schools and administered under the same conditions, at the same time, on the same day.

Examination — extended response (25%)

Assessment design

The assessment instrument was designed using the specifications, conditions and assessment objectives described in the summative external assessment section of the syllabus. The examination consisted of one paper (50 marks).

The examination assessed subject matter from Unit 4. Questions were derived from the context of Unit 4 Topic 2: Political philosophy.

The assessment required students to write an extended response to stimulus.

The stimulus comprised several short quotes offering perspectives on human nature.

Assessment decisions

Assessment decisions are made by markers by matching student responses to the external assessment marking guide (EAMG). The external assessment papers and the EAMG are published in the year after they are administered.

Effective practices

Overall, students responded well to:

- the requirement to construct a reasoned argument over the course of their analytical essays establishing a defined central thesis, in contrast to simply providing an exposition on the two selected political philosophies

- the opportunity to use relevant philosophical features in their responses, e.g. analysing arguments by arranging premises and conclusions into standard argument form, and employing the terminology of reason in the evaluation of arguments using criteria such as deductive validity and soundness, inductive strength, and credible, plausible or truthful premises

- the opportunity to draw upon philosophical features such as reasoning by analogy, the identification and refutation of counterexamples, and the careful use of modalities proportionate to the strength of claims offered

- the conditions of the assessment, producing essays the structure and sequencing of which indicated effective planning of ideas and arguments as part of the writing process.

Samples of effective practices

Extended response

Effective student responses:

- used relevant terminology consistently and appropriately

- explained in detail assumptions concerning human nature in each selected political philosophy that were accurate in all key aspects

- determined significant relationships within and between ideas and arguments connected to each political philosophy and the concept of human nature

- provided a precise deconstruction of argument/s relating to the concept of human nature using relevant ideas for each political philosophy, accurately identifying premises and conclusion/s

- provided an insightful and justified evaluation of the tenets of each political philosophy using relevant criteria

- used all appropriate criteria in the evaluation of arguments and claims

- skilfully constructed a cogent argument on either the extent to which the selected political philosophies are based on reliable assumptions concerning human nature or whether it is important that a political philosophy be in accordance with human nature, using relevant philosophical ideas effectively to support this argument and demonstrating discerning use of the stimulus

- conveyed ideas and arguments relating to the question succinctly, purposefully and fluently, using the analytical essay genre, with paragraphs logically sequenced to support the central thesis.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate an accurate, detailed explanation of assumptions concerning human nature in libertarianism

- to demonstrate the consistent and appropriate use of terminology relevant to libertarianism

- as it uses the ideas of Locke and Nozick to determine significant relationships within and between ideas connected to libertarianism and the concept of human nature.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

Firstly, P1 is true as, due to the fundamental principles of libertarianism, the consequent logically follows from the antecedent. The libertarian conception of human nature can be explicated ~~Nor by~~ by using the theories of Nozick. ~~Intrinsi~~ According to Nozick, intrinsic to our human nature are ~~is~~ our natural rights to life, liberty and property. Drawing on ~~Locke~~ John Locke's labour theory of property, humans possess a natural right to claim the products of one's labour as property, and a natural right to dispose of one's property as one sees fit as long as ~~the~~ the natural rights of others have not been violated. Nozick believed that humans desire the betterment of their own condition through the acquisition and transfer of holdings, whilst ~~desire~~ desiring the protection of their own natural rights. He argues that in the state of nature (a hypothetical scenario preceding the formation of government), a minimal state will naturally emerge as communities of people seek to better protect their natural rights. This minimal state, ~~rep~~ one that is only concerned with such protection, is the libertarian ideal. Hence, libertarianism assumes humans are driven by selfish desires, however ~~however~~ also possess a cooperative nature ~~for the benefit~~ for greater benefit. Nozick also outlines the libertarian principle that ~~such~~ these innate natural rights are morally inviolable, indicating that libertarianism does assume a degree of "an innate sense of fairness" (Corning, 2015). Therefore, provided the principles of libertarianism, P1 is true as the consequent must logically follow on from the antecedent.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate the construction of a cogent argument on the extent to which communism and social democracy are based on reliable assumptions concerning human nature

- to show how the concluding paragraph is representative of the entire essay in terms of conveying ideas and arguments in response to the question succinctly, purposefully and fluently.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

> Thus, when evaluating communism and social democracy's assumptions about human nature, it can be seen that social democracies provide a political framework which both acknowledges and ~~attenuates~~ allocates guardrails (maximin principle and interventionalist government for welfare) for the ~~that~~ nuanced and often unpredictable nature of human beings, thus making its assertions about human nature well-rounded and reasonable. As a result, as a political ideology, it provides a greater likelihood of a reasonable standard of living for the average person. On the other hand, communism makes an overly generalised assumption about humans as perpetually cooperative, which leads to undesirable results for those living under that could system. Ultimately, the sound argument from social democracy makes the reasonable assumption that humans are varied, and human nature is therefore not stagnant or the same in individuals or collectively.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate a precise deconstruction of an argument in social democracy relating to the concept of human nature

- as it demonstrates the skilful and concise synthesis of philosophical ideas relevant to social democracy (Rawls's justice as fairness theory) with the focus of the question: assumptions concerning human nature

- to show how the argument's presentation provides an effective platform for the evaluation of the claims which comprise its premises and conclusion.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

> When applying a social democratic framework to the prompt, the following standard form emerges:
>
> P1: If human nature is ~~both~~ driven by both self-interest and cooperation, then the ideal society is one which upholds justice as fairness.
>
> P2: Human nature is driven by both self-interest and cooperation.
>
> C: Therefore, the ideal society upholds justice as fairness.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate the discerning use of stimulus. The quote from Marx in the stimulus has been correctly interpreted in recognising that, according to Marxist thought, human nature is not innate, but rather is shaped by the social circumstances in which we find ourselves

- to show effective linking of the interpretation of the stimulus to the inquiry topic of human nature, using relevant terminology of communism to aid the explanation provided.

Note: The characteristic/s identified may not be the only time the characteristic/s has occurred throughout a response.

> Communism, as represented by Karl Marx, has a similiarly ~~not~~ multi-faceted conception of human nature; Marx argues not humans are produced by society (Stimulus 1), wherein if individuals are greedy and competitive, that is the result of entrenched capitalist conditioning and the false consciousness. He argues that human nature will evolve so as to eventually allow individuals to be increasingly co-operative, ~~and~~ to such an extent that the necessity for a centralised government will eventually wither away. In a similiar manner to social democracy, communism aims to maximise the positive

> freedom and liberty of the disadvantaged, in ~~this case~~ a communist context the proletariat. Marx argues that this would be achieved through the working class seizing the means of production and distribution in order to ensure equal access to resources for each individual according to need. The standard form argument from a communist perspective is as follows:

Practices to strengthen

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

- advising students of the importance of responding to the set question and avoiding a generalised critique of the two selected political philosophies. In Question 1, a noticeable trend was to identify relevant assumptions concerning human nature in the selected political philosophies, with limited engagement in determining the reliability of those assumptions

- seeking out teaching and learning opportunities that highlight understanding and appropriate use of terminology relating to each of the five political philosophies listed in Unit 4 Topic 2, e.g. correct identification of particular conceptions of freedom, equality and justice, among other political concepts, aligned to each political philosophy; the use of specific terminology in ideas and theories linked to the political philosophies (such as from Bakunin, Marx, Nozick, Rawls)

- emphasising to students that the deconstruction of arguments is a skill that employs both analysis of arguments and ideas relating to political philosophy, as well as the synthesis of relevant information relating to the question and stimulus. Effective responses used deconstruction as a means of concisely setting out key arguments and ideas in the selected political philosophies that related to assumptions concerning human nature. This is differentiated from responses that used deconstructions only as a means to present premises and conclusions to structure valid deductions. In these responses, there was less evidence of engagement with ideas relating to human nature relevant to the selected philosophies.

Additional advice

- Teachers are encouraged to provide students with the opportunity to practise effective planning to facilitate their ability to produce an extended response philosophical argument within the conditions of the external assessment.