

Philosophy & Reason subject report

2024 cohort

January 2025



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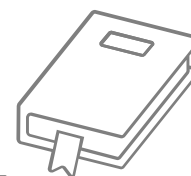
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Introduction



The annual subject reports seek to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement of internal and external assessment processes for all Queensland schools. The 2024 subject report is the culmination of the partnership between schools and the QCAA. It addresses school-based assessment design and judgments, and student responses to external assessment for General and General (Extension) subjects. In acknowledging effective practices and areas for refinement, it offers schools timely and evidence-based guidance to further develop student learning and assessment experiences for 2025.

The report also includes 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 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 internal and 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 senior subjects.

Subject highlights

36

schools offered
Philosophy &
Reason



98.56%

of students
received a
C or higher

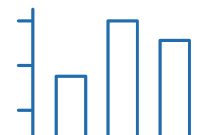


6.51%

increase in enrolment
since 2023



Subject data summary



Subject completion

The following data includes students who completed the General subject.

Note: All data is correct as at January 2025. Where percentages are provided, these are rounded to two decimal places and, therefore, may not add up to 100%.

Number of schools that offered Philosophy & Reason: 36.

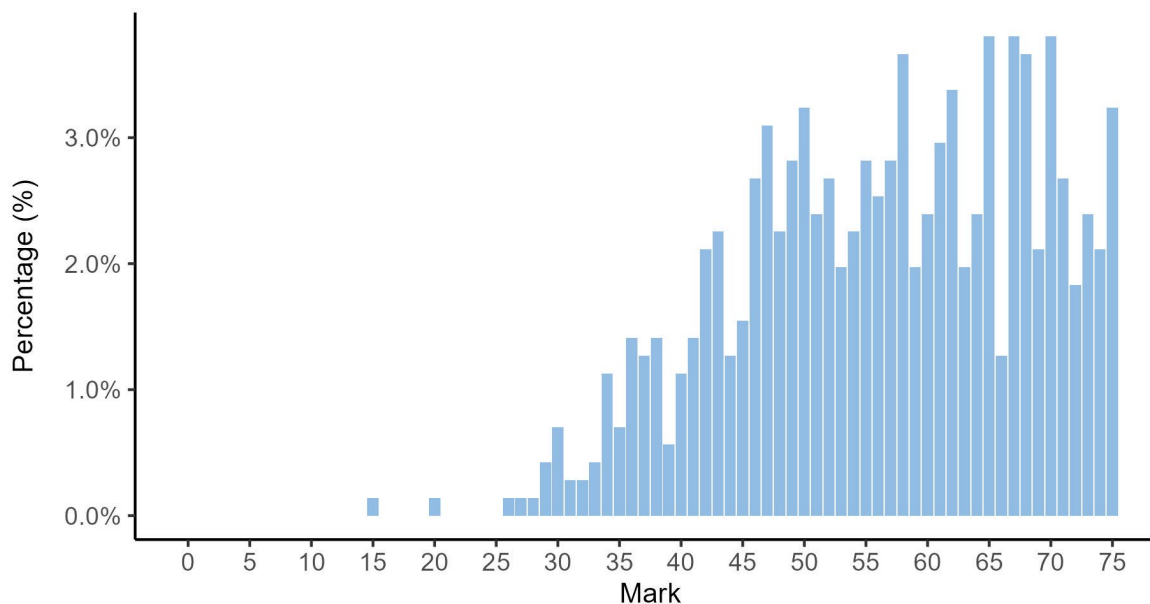
Completion of units	Unit 1	Unit 2	Units 3 and 4
Number of students completed	818	791	704

Units 1 and 2 results

Number of students	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Unit 1	784	34
Unit 2	768	23

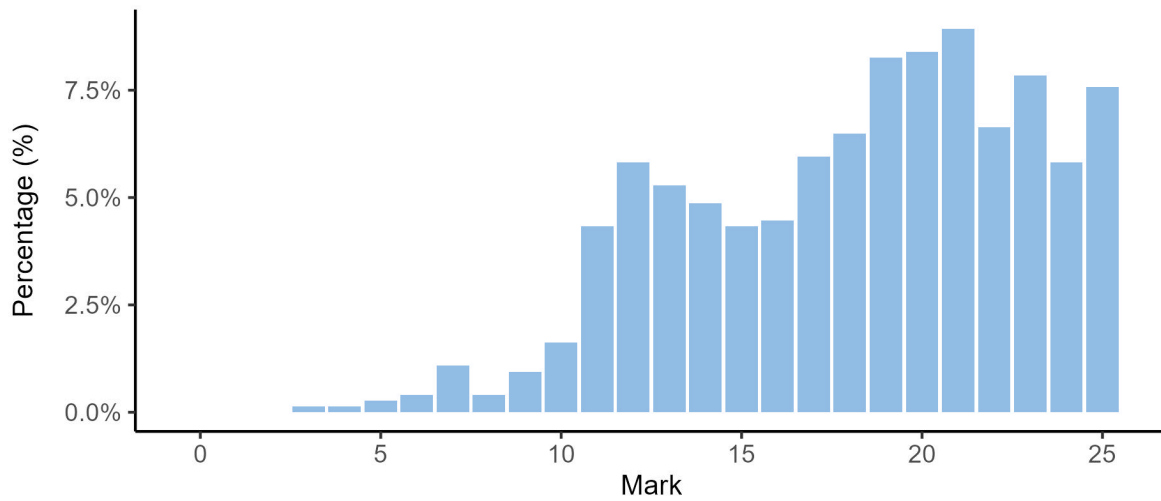
Units 3 and 4 internal assessment (IA) results

Total marks for IA

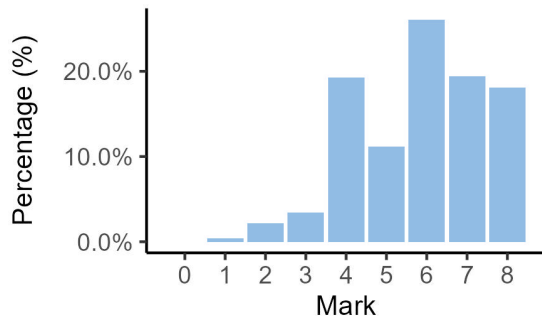


IA1 marks

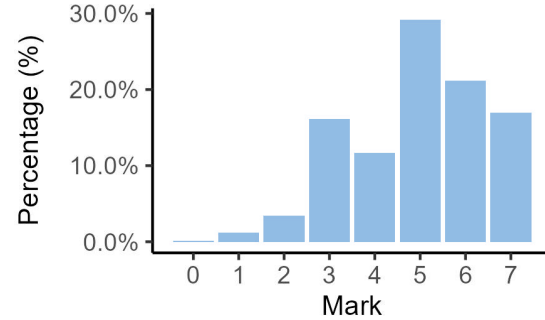
IA1 total



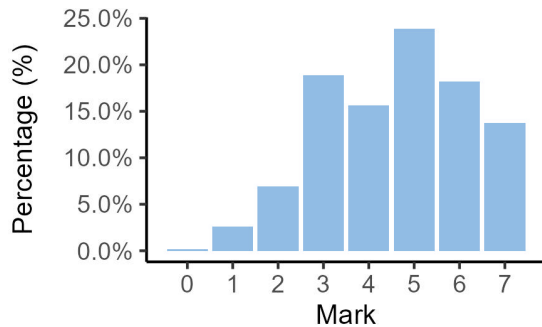
IA1 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining



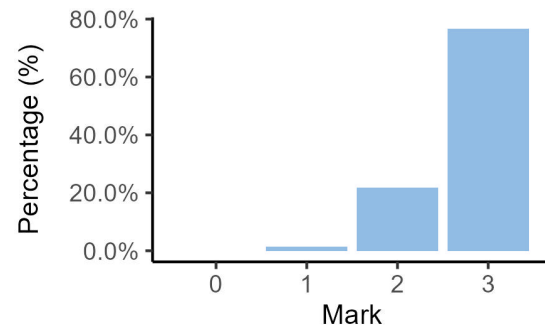
IA1 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing



IA1 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating

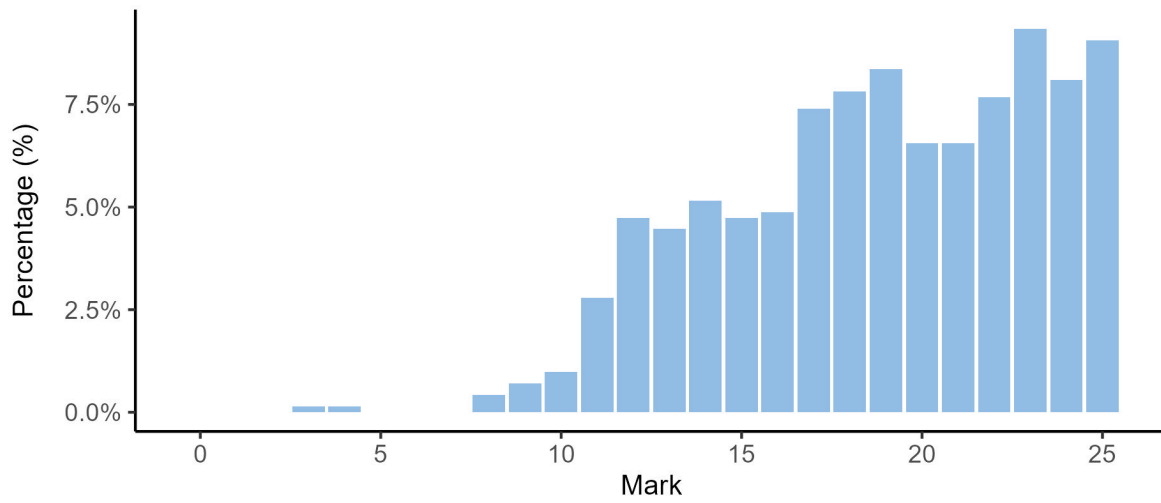


IA1 Criterion: Creating and communicating

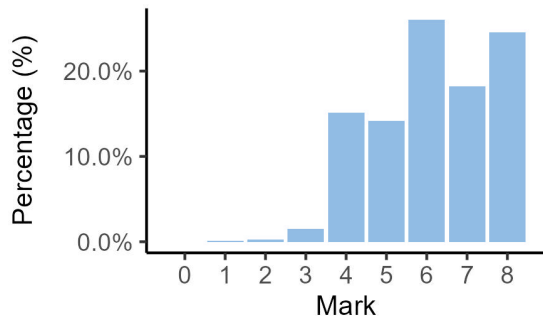


IA2 marks

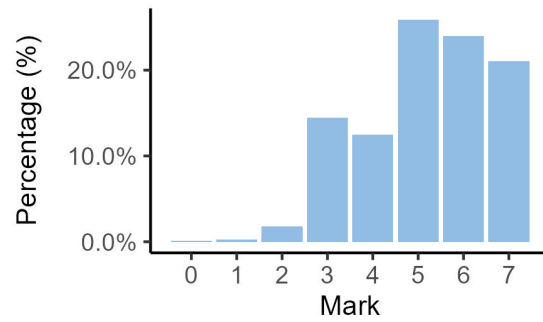
IA2 total



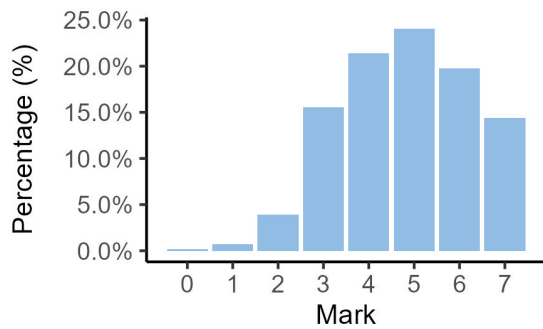
IA2 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining



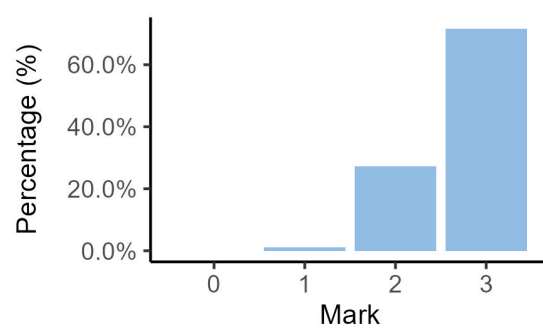
IA2 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing



IA2 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating

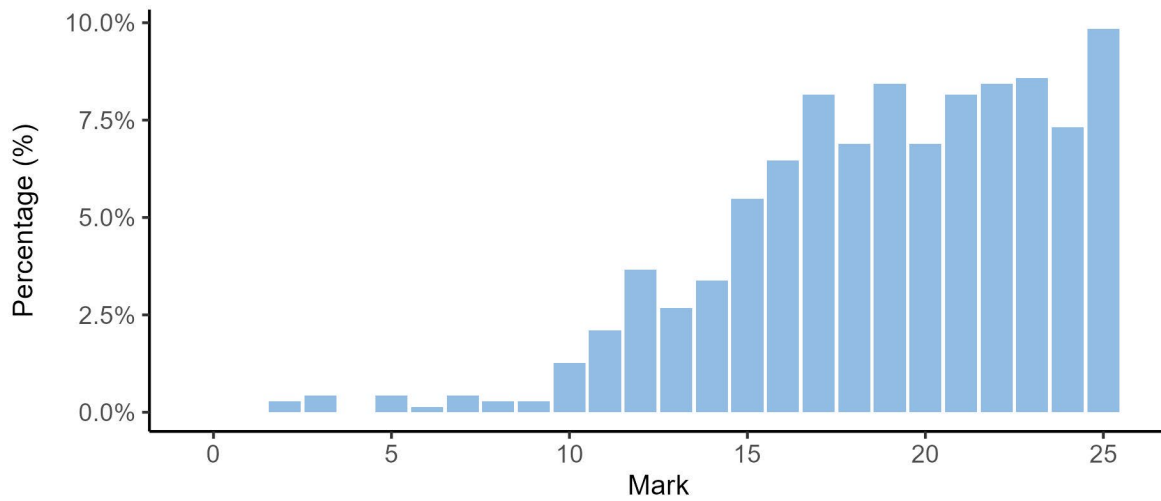


IA2 Criterion: Creating and communicating

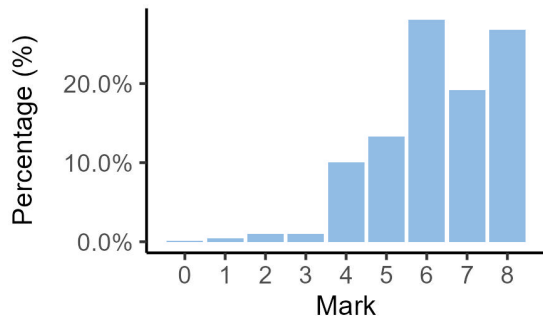


IA3 marks

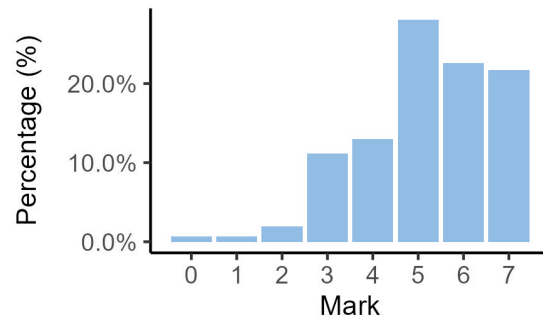
IA3 total



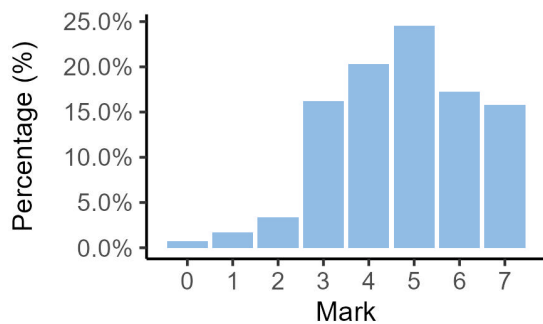
IA3 Criterion: Defining, using and explaining



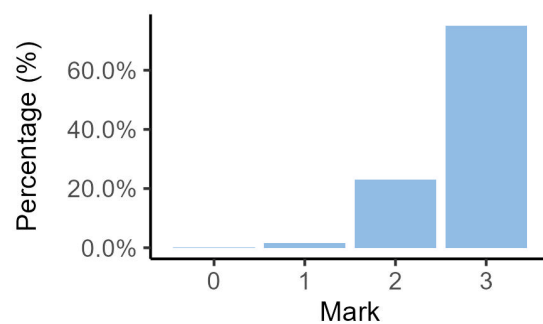
IA3 Criterion: Interpreting and analysing



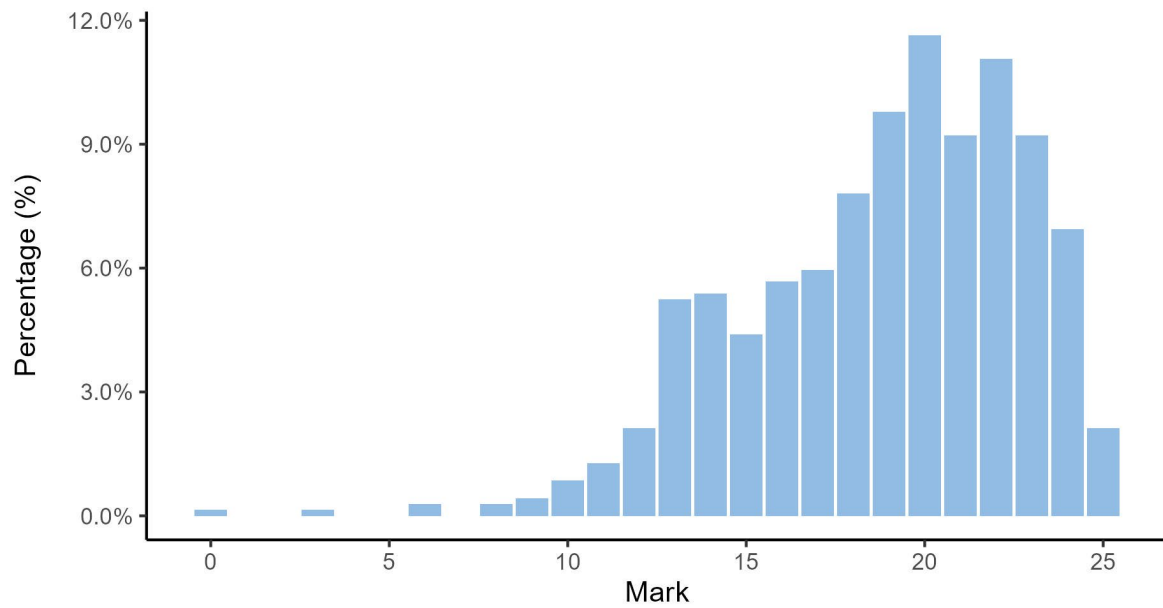
IA3 Criterion: Organising, synthesising and evaluating



IA3 Criterion: Creating and communicating

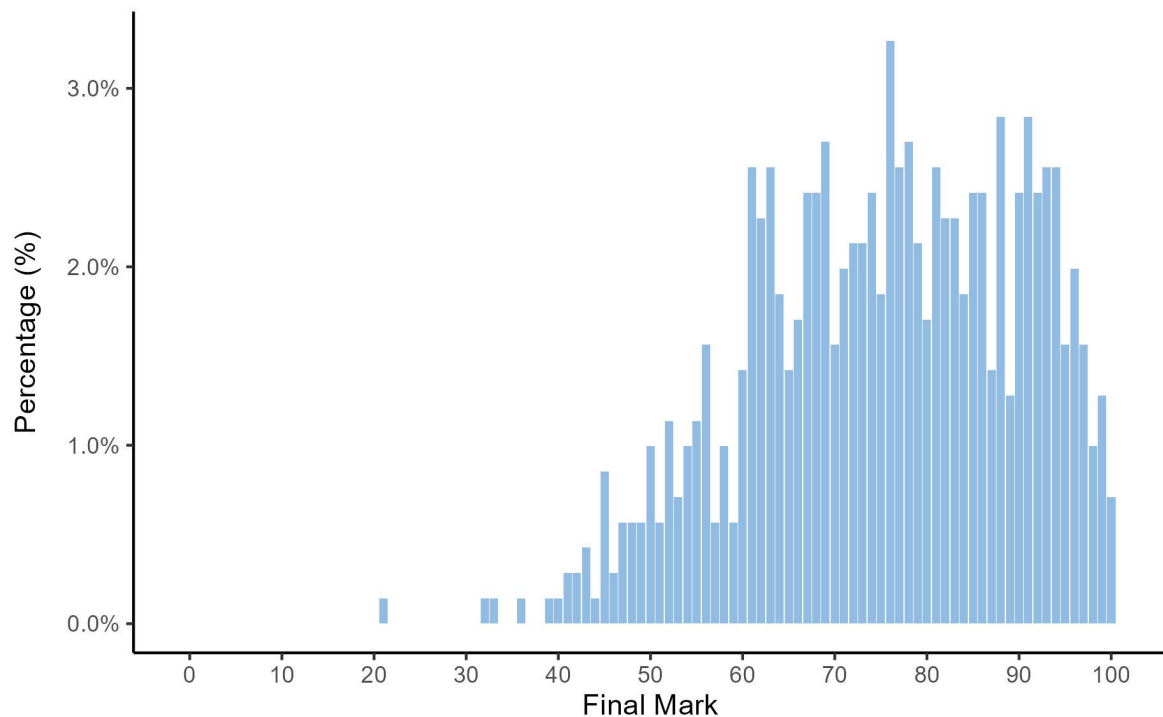


External assessment (EA) marks



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	82–65	64–43	42–19	18–0

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	249	281	164	10	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 assessment. 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 v6.0*, Section 9.5.

Percentage of instruments endorsed in Application 1

Instruments submitted	IA1	IA2	IA3
Total number of instruments	36	36	36
Percentage endorsed in Application 1	47	55	44

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 v6.0*, 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

IA	Number of schools	Number of samples requested	Number of additional samples requested	Percentage agreement with provisional marks
1	36	269	0	69.44
2	36	263	0	61.11
3	36	269	0	69.44

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	16
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	0
Scope and scale	2

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- explicitly directed students to use the terminology of reason in their responses, where appropriate
- contained stimulus that was informative yet sufficiently brief, allowing students to use the allocated time to plan a response.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- provide a contemporary issue in the stimulus that clearly has an ethical dimension to which principles within the selected ethical theories can be interpreted, applied and evaluated
- provide brief primary source philosophical material in the stimulus, rather than material taken from secondary sources, to enable students to demonstrate interpretation and explanation of the selected ethical theories.

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	2
Language	1
Layout	2
Transparency	3

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- featured succinct and precise task instructions that informed students of the cognitions they were required to demonstrate, using verbs that aligned to the cognitions contained in the assessment objectives and ISMG descriptors
- featured a contemporary ethical issue that was not likely to alienate or otherwise distress students.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- use the explicit language of the syllabus specifications, e.g. Kantian ethics rather than deontological ethics, and virtue ethics rather than Aristotelian ethics
- frame the task in a clear and objective style that avoids inadvertently positioning students to argue for a particular conclusion.

Additional advice

- An effective way to design the IA1 task is to choose or design an ethical issue that allows particular features of the selected ethical theories to be applied, analysed and evaluated, e.g. Kant's *universalizability* principle, Aristotle's *doctrine of the mean*. Strategically select relevant quotes or short passages from key philosophers to draw students' attention to these particular features.
- A hypothetical moral dilemma may be used as stimulus if it has contemporary relevance.
- The scope and scale of the stimulus package should be limited by selecting direct quotes or passages from relevant philosophers, e.g. Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, Mill.

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	75.00	25.00	0	0
2	Interpreting and analysing	94.44	5.56	0	0
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	91.67	8.33	0	0
4	Creating and communicating	100.00	0.00	0	0

Effective practices

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

- judgments recognised evidence demonstrating the student's ability to interpret ideas and information relating to moral philosophy included how well principles of the selected ethical theories were contextually applied to the unseen problem or issue
- judgments made on the determination of relationships went beyond mere identification and involved explanations of connections within or between ideas.

Practices to strengthen

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

- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Defining, using and explaining criterion, attention should be given to
 - ensuring that appropriate reasoning terminology is being used, e.g. given validity and soundness are qualities of *arguments*, a response that evaluates a *premise* as valid or sound (rather than true, credible or plausible) does not demonstrate understanding of these terms. Such errors in responses appropriately match descriptors at lower performance levels with respect to use of terminology, demonstrating understanding of meaning
 - determining the correctness of explanations of moral theories and principles, e.g. an explanation of Kant's *universal law* principle that erroneously refers to the universalizability of an action, rather than the maxim the action is based on, does not demonstrate an explanation that is *correct in all key aspects* as required by the 7–8 mark performance level
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Interpreting and analysing criterion, ensure that
 - deconstructed arguments, claimed in the response to be valid, are, in fact, presented as inferentially valid. Arguments that are claimed to be valid, but in their deconstructed presentation display a formal fallacy (e.g. affirming the consequent or denying the antecedent), more appropriately display evidence of deconstruction at the mid to lower performance levels
 - for an *accurate* deconstruction of argument at the 6–7 mark performance level, the premises of deconstructed arguments correctly represent the philosophical ideas under

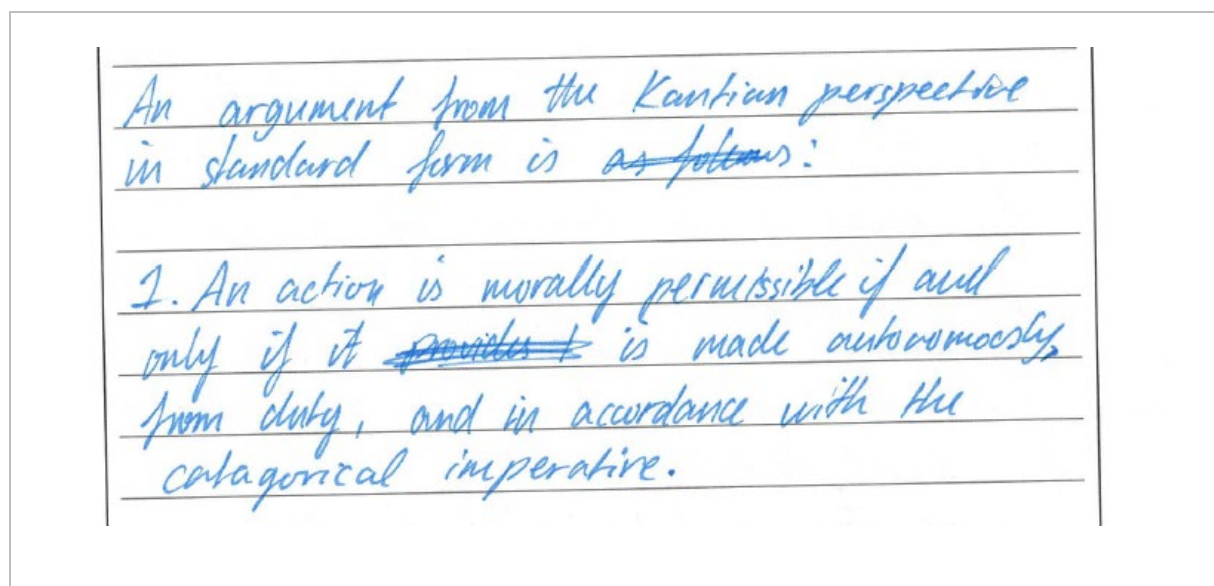
analysis. Misrepresentation of the ideas by deliberately setting up a strawman's argument matches descriptors at the lower performance levels

- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion, ensure that
 - evaluation of the two selected ethical theories are applied to the provided issue or problem. *Insightful* evaluation, as required at the 6–7 mark performance level, requires evidence of justified consideration, using thoughtful criteria, of how effectively the theories operate to achieve a resolution to the issue or problem
 - appropriate reasoning criteria are used to evaluate claims and arguments as *relevant*, as required at the 6–7 mark performance level. Inappropriate use of reasoning criteria (e.g. soundness when evaluating a premise) more appropriately matches lower performance levels
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Creating and communicating criterion, features of the analytical essay genre articulate a central thesis. In the context of the task, the central thesis is the overall conclusion the essay seeks to establish. A statement to the effect that the essay will interpret and evaluate theories and draw a conclusion (i.e. simply highlights the cognitions to be demonstrated) does not constitute a central thesis.

Samples

The following excerpt illustrates an appropriate match of evidence in the Defining, using and explaining criterion requiring consistent and appropriate use of the terminology of reason and moral philosophy in relation to the selected ethical issue (7–8 mark performance level). This section of the response accurately employs specific terminology from Kantian ethics, with the identified concepts of *autonomy*, *duty* and *categorical imperative* unpacked and explained later in the response in the context of their application to the ethical issue. Relevant reasoning terminology is correctly employed in the premises of the standard form deconstruction, in the selection and appropriate use of validity and soundness as evaluative criteria for a deductive argument, and in the selection of truth as the appropriate criterion to assess individual premises.

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



2. For Henrietta Lacks' descendants to prevent ~~the~~ further use of HeLa cells would be an action made autonomously, from duty, and in accordance with the categorical imperative.

∴ For Henrietta Lacks' descendants to prevent further use of HeLa cells would be morally permissible; thus, they should do it.

The argument is valid, therefore whether it is sound is contingent upon ~~whether~~ whether its premises are true.

The following excerpt demonstrates insightful and justified evaluation of philosophical theories and views in moral philosophy. The response uses a perceptive thought experiment, thematically linked to the specific ethical problem provided in the task, to highlight the perceived deficiencies of act utilitarianism as a moral theory. The evaluation is supported by the appropriate use of terminology of both moral philosophy and reasoning, including the assessment of premises as false, and the entire deductive argument as unsound.

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

Premise ~~one~~ ¹ seems initially attractive - few would deny that, for example, we should generally try and save as many lives as we can, and that ~~to~~ to try and maximise pleasure and minimise pain is commendable. However, upon further inspection, it does not hold.

Consider the following scenario:

A young child has been involved in a terrible accident and ~~they~~ ^{was} ~~have~~ died on the operating table. In the waiting room, the child's otherwise healthy mother, ~~fired from the events of the day,~~ has fallen asleep, unaware that her child has just died. Elsewhere in the hospital are five young people who are desperately in need of ~~an~~ organ transplants, and who ~~happen to~~ perfectly match the sleeping mother, who has no other family.

If we were serious about minimising pain and maximising pleasure, we would choose to anaesthetise the sleeping woman, ~~sparing her the and~~

harvest her organs to save the five. In doing so, we would spare her the pain of ~~ever~~ ever finding out about her child's death. Further, saving the five would produce intense, prolonged and certain happiness for their families, ~~of~~ whereas the mother and child leave nobody to mourn them. On all calculations, ~~to~~ to anaesthetise the woman ~~minimises~~ provides the greatest utility to the greatest number.

However, ~~it is against our moral intuitions,~~ ~~with~~ the majority of the population would find the act of killing the mother morally abhorrent, regardless of the Utilitarian cost/benefit calculation. This is ^{shows that} ~~because~~ we clearly value other things ~~over~~ ~~the~~ as more important than the maximisation of pleasure and the minimisation of pain, such as the right to bodily autonomy and the unique and unquantifiable value of each human life.

This is further evidenced by Robert Nozick's 'pleasure machine' experiment, in which, ~~upon~~ given the choice between a simulated state of constant pleasure and real life, it was found that the majority would reject the simulation of pleasure in favour of a more painful reality. Thus, it is clear that pleasure ^{or utility} is secondary to autonomy and authenticity, and should not be the basis for moral decision making. As such, premise ~~one~~ ² is false, and the Utilitarian argument is found to be unsound.

Additional advice

- Schools should take care to correctly apply the principle of best-fit when using the ISMG. In a performance level that contains a two-mark range, the upper mark in the range can only be awarded if evidence in the response matches all descriptors within the performance level. The lower mark in the range should be awarded where evidence in the response matches a majority of descriptors within the performance level. Further information on the application of best-fit is contained in the *Making judgments* webinar, available in the Resources section of Syllabuses application (app) in the QCAA Portal.
- The terminology of reason, as listed in Unit 1, should be employed purposefully to analyse and evaluate arguments in responses, rather than simply be included for its own sake. For instance, there is no requirement to identify an informal fallacy if not relevant. The use of reasoning terminology that is not purposeful can adversely impact succinctness (Creating and communicating criterion) and the synthesis of ideas and information relating to moral philosophy (Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion).
- The misspelling of key philosophers' names (e.g. 'Mills' instead of 'Mill') constitutes an error to be considered when determining the selection of the appropriate performance level in the Creating and communicating criterion.
- Schools should be attentive to the academic integrity implications of repeating the same assessment task annually given the syllabus requirement that responses be to an unseen problem or question.

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	12
Authentication	0
Authenticity	0
Item construction	0
Scope and scale	4

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- explicitly directed students to use the terminology of reason in their responses where appropriate
- presented tasks that focused the inquiry on one philosophical school of thought explicitly listed in the syllabus (Unit 3 Topic 2). The comparing and contrasting of ideas across philosophical schools of thought (or specific thinkers within these schools) was facilitated through the judicious selection of stimulus material.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- provide a specific contextualising social issue to which students can interpret and apply the selected philosophical school of thought, allowing them to argue for a conclusion concerning the relevance of the philosophy to today's society
- supply sufficient stimulus on both the contextualising social issue and the philosophical school of thought to enable students to formulate a response. With respect to the philosophy stimulus, students are best placed to address the assessment objectives when provided with

substantive philosophical arguments to analyse and evaluate, rather than unjustified claims or opinions.

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

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- featured succinct and precise task instructions, using verbs that aligned to the cognitions contained in the assessment objectives and ISMG descriptors, that informed students of the cognitions they were required to demonstrate
- explicitly directed students to adhere to the genre conventions of an analytical essay.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- align across all sections of the instrument — the context, task and stimulus — with respect to the description of the contextualising social issue provided.

Additional advice

- The focus of the IA2 task is for students to explain, analyse and evaluate key claims, arguments and ideas within a philosophical school of thought. The contextualising social issue, to which the philosophy is applied, allows students to
 - meaningfully interpret the philosophy
 - draw conclusions about the applicability of its claims and arguments
 - control the scope and scale of the inquiry.
- It is acceptable for tasks to focus on a particular thinker or thinkers within a philosophical school of thought.
- To allow students to demonstrate their ability to explain, interpret, analyse and evaluate, schools should provide primary source arguments from relevant thinkers as stimulus, particularly as secondary source material often performs these cognitions for the audience. Such secondary source material is more appropriately used in the teaching and learning that supports the undertaking of the task.

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	75.00	22.22	2.78	0
2	Interpreting and analysing	72.22	27.78	0.00	0
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	75.00	25.00	0.00	0
4	Creating and communicating	100.00	0.00	0.00	0

Effective practices

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

- judgments focused on the interpretation, explanation and evaluation of key tenets of the selected philosophical school of thought, rather than on non-philosophical aspects of the contextualising issue
- judgments made on the determination of relationships recognised the need for responses to elucidate the connections within or between ideas and arguments relevant to the philosophical school of thought in order to match upper performance-level descriptors. Responses that simply identified connections with little further explication were more appropriately matched to lower performance-level descriptors
- judgments recognised that to constitute discerning use of stimulus material, good judgment needed to be evident in the selection and use of material due to its value or relevance to the central thesis being argued in the response.

Practices to strengthen

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

- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Defining, using and explaining criterion
 - apply those descriptors focusing on matching terminology to its use in a manner which *demonstrates understanding of meaning*. Simple inclusion of relevant terminology, or its use, in ways that are vague or incoherent more appropriately matches descriptors at the lower performance levels
 - the terminology relating to the selected school of thought must incorporate reasoning terminology, given reason and argument constitute the methodology of philosophical inquiry (Topic 2: Philosophical schools of thought, Syllabus section 4.4). Reasoning

terminology must be used purposefully and precisely to be appropriately matched to upper performance-level descriptors that require the consistent and appropriate use of terminology demonstrating astute understanding of meaning. Responses that either fail to employ reasoning terminology to facilitate philosophical inquiry or otherwise employ such terminology without precision or clear purpose are more appropriately matched to lower performance-level descriptors

- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Interpreting and analysing criterion
 - at the 6–7 mark performance level, arguments claimed by the response to be valid deductions should be comprised of precisely formed and identifiable propositions. Additionally, the inferential structure of the argument should clearly demonstrate how the conclusion can be guaranteed, given the propositional structure of the premises. To be *accurate*, the subject matter of the premises and conclusion should also correctly represent the philosophical ideas under analysis. Misrepresentation of ideas by deliberately setting up a strawman’s argument matches descriptors for both deconstruction and the interpretation of ideas at the lower performance levels
 - a *considered* argument deconstruction at the 4–5 mark performance level requires the demonstration of correct inferential connections between premises and conclusion, with minor errors. Responses claiming deductive validity for an argument that is comprised of numbered sentences with no clear inferential connections evident demonstrates deconstruction at the lower performance levels
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion
 - the provision of substantial information related to the selected philosophical school of thought that is unused or otherwise irrelevant to establishing the essay’s central thesis matches descriptors concerning ‘synthesis of ideas and information’ at lower performance levels
 - responses that include claims or assertions without reasoned support best match the ‘evaluate’ assessment objective of the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion at the 2–3 mark performance level. Such evidence also matches the ‘synthesise’ assessment objective of this criterion (*syllabus p. 31*) at lower performance levels, given the lack of ‘key aspects having been considered and resolved’
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Creating and communicating criterion
 - the presentation of substantial information not relevant to establishing the essay’s central thesis is matched to descriptors concerning the *conveying of ideas and arguments* at lower performance levels
 - responses that align with descriptors at the 3-mark performance level must employ referencing conventions appropriately, including for stimulus material
 - the *central thesis* is the overall conclusion a response seeks to establish through reasoning. The presentation of a central thesis is a convention of the analytical essay genre. The absence of a clear central thesis matches descriptors at the 1-mark performance level.

Samples

The following excerpt demonstrates an appropriate match of evidence to the 6–7 mark performance level in the Interpreting and analysing criterion, requiring detailed and informed interpretation of significant ideas and information relating to the philosophical school of thought (existentialism). In the excerpt, the student insightfully interprets Camus’s original text to elucidate his philosophy of absurdism. The determination of relevant and significant relationships within

Camus's ideas is also demonstrated through explicitly discussing the analogous connection between Camus's use of the Sisyphus parable to his broader absurdist philosophy.

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

Camus' philosophy of absurdism suggests that human life has no inherent meaning, and "that the denseness and that strangeness of the world," makes life absurd. He posits that the Universe is devoid of providing such purpose, and this meaninglessness, "this divorce between man and this life ... is properly the feeling of absurdity." However, by embracing this absurdity and accepting that the Universe is indifferent to the search for meaning, we act as the "absurd hero" by revolting. Camus writes that "one of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt," where one accepts the pointless nature of our lives but continues to live regardless (Aronson, R, 2021) (Camus, A, 1942). He uses the Greek myth of Sisyphus as an analogy to compare the myth's punishment to our daily lives. Sisyphus is condemned to push a boulder up a steep cliff where it shall ultimately fall to its starting point, endlessly, and eternally. Our lives, "four hours in the office, or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday..." this routine, to Camus, is identical to Sisyphus' actions; futile, pointless, and carry no meaning compared to the grand scheme of the Universe. However, despite this, the philosopher proposes that "one must imagine Sisyphus happy," with his routine, and thereby he becomes the "absurd hero," by embracing absurdity whilst simultaneously rebelling against it (Aronson, R, 2021) (Camus, A, 1942). Source 1 demonstrates the writer as an absurd hero, as they find happiness in the absurdity of pointless dates, evident through the line, "I often think back on it fondly," to which Camus would support. When applied to this context of online dating, Camus' philosophy can be standardised as follows:

The following excerpt provides an example of a detailed and accurate deconstruction of relevant arguments relating to the philosophical school of thought (existentialism), synthesising the philosophy with the contextualising issue. The student skilfully employs the deductively valid form of a hypothetical syllogism to set out their argument. The inclusion in the response of a dictionary of propositions and a translation of the argument assists the reader in checking the accuracy of the symbolised argument provided.

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

This argument is standardised as such:

$P = \textit{Inauthentic Living}$	$P \gg Q$
$Q = \textit{Reject Radical Freedom}$	$Q \gg R$
$R = \textit{Indulging in Bad Faith}$	$\therefore P \gg R$
	P
	$\therefore R$

P1: If we live inauthentically then we reject the radical freedom we have.

P2: If we reject the radical freedom we have, we are indulging in bad faith.

IC: When we live inauthentically we are indulging in bad faith.

P3: Online dating is a means to live inauthentically.

\therefore Online dating is a method of indulging in bad faith.

The presented argument is structured as a serial chain argument and is therefore valid. However not all the premises convey truth, a result of the principle of bad faith's impractical nature, and thus the argument is unsound.

Additional advice

- For arguments assessed as deductively valid, accurate deconstruction is aided by presenting arguments concisely, in standard form, using a recognised valid argument structure, e.g. modus ponens.
- If propositional language is used to symbolise arguments, a dictionary of the relevant propositions and a translation of the argument should be included.
- Before claiming a philosopher's argument to be fallacious, students should ensure ideas and arguments have been correctly interpreted and represented, while exercising the principle of charity. Otherwise, their evaluation may commit a strawman's fallacy. Students should pay particular attention to not commit formal or informal fallacies in their own reasoning.
- When creating responses in Philosophy & Reason, an analytical essay is connected prose that has the purpose of establishing a central thesis through careful reasoning. Language is used to facilitate logical, rather than rhetorical, persuasion. A student's claims and assertions should be expressed with a strength that is commensurate with the reasoning and evidence provided in support. In this respect, care should be taken with the use of intensifiers, e.g. very, extremely.

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	16
Authentication	1
Authenticity	1
Item construction	3
Scope and scale	5

Effective practices

Validity priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- contained instructions, using cognitive verbs that aligned to those used in the assessment objectives and ISMG descriptors, that clearly conveyed the thinking students were required to demonstrate in their responses
- explicitly directed students to use the terminology of reason in their responses, where appropriate
- provided context statements that helpfully framed the inquiry but did not contain information that would otherwise deprive students of an opportunity to demonstrate interpretation and explanation, e.g. contained a summary of a particular philosopher's argument.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- align to the syllabus specifications in requiring students to arrive at a conclusion about the existence, source or status of a specific right or category of rights

- contain an instruction that directs students to construct a justified argument in relation to the set question by way of an analytical essay. In this respect, students are aided by responding to a task question that is normative rather than descriptive
- supply sufficient stimulus on both the contemporary rights issue and relevant philosophy to enable students to formulate a response. With respect to the philosophy stimulus, students are best placed to address the assessment objectives at the upper standards of the ISMG when provided with substantive arguments to analyse and evaluate, rather than unjustified or simplistic claims, opinions and descriptions.

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	3

Effective practices

Accessibility priorities were effectively demonstrated in assessment instruments that:

- selected interesting contemporary rights-related issues that did not alienate or otherwise disadvantage students
- aligned across all sections of the instrument — the context, task and stimulus — with respect to the description of the rights issue selected.

Practices to strengthen

It is recommended that assessment instruments:

- articulate the rights inquiry with sufficient precision to ensure the task is conceptually clear to students.

Additional advice

- In designing IA3 instruments, there is no requirement that tasks be limited to the rights theories specified in the 'explain principles and theories within moral philosophy' section of Unit 4 Topic 1.
- Examples of inquiries conducted by schools included
 - what ought to be the extent of a right to civil disobedience in the context of climate change activism?
 - the philosophical basis for a proposed right to affordable housing
 - how to balance competing rights claims in a pluralistic society, e.g. the right to expression as against the right to be free of discrimination
 - whether a right to a liveable environment for future generations is philosophically justifiable

- in the context of global poverty, should the right to life proclaimed in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights be construed as a negative right or a positive right?
- should non-human entities (e.g. animals or artificially intelligent robots) be afforded rights? If so, by what criteria do such entities qualify for rights?

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	83.33	16.67	0	0
2	Interpreting and analysing	83.33	16.67	0	0
3	Organising, synthesising and evaluating	77.78	22.22	0	0
4	Creating and communicating	100.00	0.00	0	0

Effective practices

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

- judgments recognised that the focus of evaluation needs to be on philosophical theories and views relating to rights, rather than on non-philosophical considerations connected to the contextualising contemporary issue.

Practices to strengthen

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

- care be taken to correctly apply the principle of best-fit when using the ISMG. In a performance level that contains a two-mark range, the upper mark in the range can only be awarded if evidence in the response matches all descriptors within the performance level. The lower mark in the range should be awarded where evidence in the response matches most descriptors within the performance level. Further information on the application of best-fit is contained in the *Making judgments* webinar, available in the resources section of the Syllabuses app in the QCAA Portal
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Defining, using and explaining criterion
 - ensure the terminology relating to rights incorporates reasoning terminology, given reason and argument constitute the methodology of philosophical inquiry (see the terminology subject matter in Syllabus section 5.3 Topic 1: Rights). Appropriate matching to upper performance-level descriptors requires the ‘consistent and appropriate’ use of terminology

- demonstrating *astute* understanding of meaning. Reasoning terminology must be used purposefully and precisely. Responses that either fail to employ reasoning terminology to facilitate philosophical inquiry, or otherwise employ such terminology without precision or clear purpose, are more appropriately matched to lower performance-level descriptors
- upper performance-level descriptors require the *detailed* explanation of concepts relating to rights. Responses should contain evidence of engagement with philosophical conceptualisations of rights relevant to the topic under inquiry, e.g. providing necessary and/or sufficient conditions for the right, justifying whether the right operates as a moral or legal right, as a positive or negative right, as an absolute or qualified right
- when matching evidence to descriptors in the Interpreting and analysing criterion
 - at the 6–7 mark performance level, arguments claimed by the response to be valid deductions should be comprised of precisely formed and identifiable propositions, with the inferential structure of the argument clearly demonstrating how the conclusion can be guaranteed, given the propositional structure of the premises. To be *accurate* also requires the subject matter of the premises and conclusion to correctly represent the philosophical ideas under analysis. Misrepresentation of ideas by deliberately setting up a strawman’s argument matches descriptors for both deconstruction and the interpretation of ideas at the lower performance levels
 - *considered* argument deconstruction at the 4–5 mark performance level requires the demonstration of correct inferential connections between premises and conclusion, with minor errors. Responses claiming deductive validity for an argument comprised of numbered sentences with no clear inferential connections evident demonstrates deconstruction at the lower performance levels
 - when matching evidence to descriptors in the Organising, synthesising and evaluating criterion
 - responses should explicitly recognise and address counterarguments to their central thesis to satisfy descriptors at the upper performance levels involving ‘synthesis ... in which key aspects have been considered and resolved’. Counterarguments are opposing philosophical positions to that adopted by a response’s central thesis. As addressing counterarguments is central to philosophical inquiry, doing so also assists students to demonstrate the evaluation of philosophical views relating to rights. Failure to address relevant counterarguments matches lower descriptors, indicating *partial* (2–3 mark) or *superficial* (1 mark) synthesis, depending on other aspects of the response
 - ‘criteria used in evaluation of claims and arguments’ refers to specific criteria of reasoning — of validity and soundness (with respect to deductive arguments), strength (with respect to inductive arguments) and truth, plausibility and/or credibility (with respect to premises and claims). To match upper performance-level descriptors, such criteria must be employed appropriately and accurately
 - when matching evidence to descriptors in the Creating and communicating criterion
 - responses that align with descriptors at the 3-mark performance level must employ referencing conventions appropriately, including for stimulus material
 - the *central thesis* is the overall conclusion a response seeks to establish through reasoning. The presentation of a central thesis is a convention of the analytical essay genre. The absence of a clear central thesis matches descriptors at the 1-mark performance level.

Samples

The following excerpt has been included because it provides a detailed description and explanation of theories relating to rights (Defining, using & explaining criterion). Hohfeld's philosophical ideas relating to rights are analysed, explained and insightfully linked with Bentham's critique of natural rights to skilfully reason in support of the essay's central thesis. Terminology relating to rights evidencing astute understanding of meaning is also present, albeit the erroneous use of sound as a criterion to assess premises illustrates 'generally appropriate use of terminology' at the 5–6 mark performance level on the balance of evidence overall.

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

Well-known analytical philosopher Wesley Hohfeld was a strong advocate for legal rights and defined their nature through the Hohfeldian analysis, distinguishing between first order rights and second order rights (Barker, 2018) (Philosophy Tube, 2016) (YaleCourses, 2015). Within his framework of first order rights, he categorised them into claims, duties, privileges and no-claims (Philosophy Tube, 2016). For instance, if I have a claim, you have a duty; thus, I have a claim (right) to life, you have a duty not to kill me. Additionally, if I am at liberty to do something, you have no-claim on me not to do it. As illustrated through the Hohfeldian analysis, the core purpose and significance of a right lies in the immunity it offers from interference, i.e. the duty it imposes on others to respect and refrain from infringing upon that right. To ensure this protection, rights therefore must be enforceable, a crucial quality that Bentham recognises natural rights lack (Stimulus: Source 1). Rights can only emerge after the social contract is released in which society mutually recognises and accepts them—their existence and significance is reliant on society. They are consequently safeguarded, upheld and enforced by law of which everyone is subject to. As such, it becomes incredibly challenging to accept that rights are natural and can exist in a pre-societal condition. Therefore, P4, P5 and IC2 can be accepted as sound given their adherence to logic and reason, and whilst Locke offers an insightful philosophy, flaws within his argument and Bentham's compelling counter arguments prevent Locke from successfully disproving the premises. As it has been established that rights are legal, P6 asserts that Government therefore has the authority to place restrictions on them. Given rights are a product of the law and are therefore limitable, it is coherent and reasonable to accept that Government subsequently has the authority to determine the extent of their exercise. Individuals who benefit from a governed society through the social contract must accept the authority that imposes limitations on particular freedoms to greater protect other rights. As such, P6 can be accepted as sound.

The following excerpt has been included because it evidences the synthesis of ideas and information in which key aspects have been considered and resolved (Organising, synthesising & evaluating criterion), and the determination of relevant and significant relationships between ideas (Interpreting & analysing criterion). Locke's natural rights theory is acknowledged as a legitimate counterargument to the essay's central thesis that it is acceptable for government to place limits on freedom of expression. In engaging with the counterargument, the response insightfully draws on the ideas of Bentham to demonstrate the weakness in Locke's position.

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

P4 and P5 argue that rights cannot exist in nature and are instead established by law, leading to IC2 which states rights are therefore legal. Locke's notion of 'natural rights' directly challenges P4 and IC2 by instead arguing that the fundamental rights to life, liberty and property precede the establishment of civil society as they already exist in the state of nature (Munro, 2024) (Stimulus: Source 3). He argues these rights are God-given and inherently exist in nature, being intrinsic to each person regardless of the laws of any specific society, thereby raising doubts regarding the argument's soundness (Tuckness, 2020) (Al-Salaita, 2020). However, Jeremy Bentham counters Locke's conception of natural rights, arguing that if everyone exercises their 'natural right' without limits, it would be to extinguish the right altogether, because "what is every man's right is no man's right" (Stimulus: Source 1). For example, Locke says when a person takes something from the state of nature and adds their labour to it, they make it their own property, and everyone has the natural right to property (Locke, 1690). Yet, if everyone were to exercise their right to property without limits, it would lead to conflicts of interest and contradictions of the right, ultimately rendering it meaningless and unable to be universalised. Bentham's criticism destabilises Locke's natural rights argument, thereby weakening its overall ability to counter P4 and IC2 effectively.

Additional advice

- If propositional language is used to symbolise arguments, a dictionary of the relevant propositions and a translation of the argument should be included.
- For arguments assessed as deductively valid, accurate deconstruction is aided by presenting arguments concisely in standard form using a recognised valid argument structure, e.g. modus ponens.
- When creating responses in Philosophy & Reason, an analytical essay is connected prose that establishes a central thesis through careful reasoning. Language is used to facilitate logical rather than rhetorical persuasion. A student's claims and assertions should be expressed with a strength that is commensurate to the reasoning and evidence provided in support. In this respect, care should be taken with the use of intensifiers, e.g. very, extremely.

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. The question was derived from the context of Unit 4 Topic 2: Political philosophy.

The assessment required students to create an analytical essay response that communicated a philosophical argument justifying the extent to which there is an obligation on the individual to support others in society. Students were required to support their position by analysing and evaluating arguments relating to personal obligation in two political philosophies, which they selected from the four offered in the question.

The stimulus comprised an explanation of two methods of income tax calculation: progressive and flat rate. The intent of the stimulus was to elicit analysis and evaluation of the tenets of the selected political philosophies relevant to their conception of personal obligation.

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 when they:

- demonstrated responsiveness to the question by constructing a carefully planned and reasoned argument that established their position on the extent to which there is an obligation on individuals to support others in society. That position was then used to inform their judgment on which form of income tax calculation is appropriate. This approach was in contrast to simply providing a broad exposition on the tenets of the two selected political philosophies
- provided explanations that clearly demonstrated how each political philosophy advocates for a particular conception of obligation, and determined connections between this conception and other relevant understandings of each political philosophy, e.g. concerning human nature, freedom, equality, justice, purpose of government.
- used argument deconstruction as a tool to analyse ideas situated in their selected political philosophies relevant to the notion of obligation, and presented their deconstructions in a logically recognisable form to facilitate demonstration of precise inferential connections between premises and conclusions

- made clear the underlying criteria relied upon to evaluate the merits of the political philosophies engaged with, including such basis for judgment as the promotion of individual and/or collective wellbeing, social cohesiveness, accordance with human nature, fairness.

Practices to strengthen

When preparing students for external assessment, it is recommended that teachers:

- advise students to focus on the philosophical question asked, rather than on the contextualising issue only. Responses that dealt with the tax calculation issue without substantially addressing the underlying philosophical question concerning *obligation* were less successful in demonstrating objectives of explanation, analysis and evaluation of *philosophical* ideas, theories and arguments
- provide opportunities for students to engage with key arguments that align with the five listed political philosophies in the syllabus, e.g. Rawls's *justice as fairness* argument, Nozick's *taxation is forced labour* and *Wilt Chamberlain* arguments. An understanding of such arguments is beneficial when engaging with a range of conceptual inquiries in political philosophy, and when done in addressing the EA topic, the analysis and evaluation of such arguments allow students to demonstrate key assessment objectives
- encourage students to evaluate political ideas, claims and theories from an external point of view, rather than from the perspective of an adherent of the political philosophy under inquiry. Evaluation carried out from the latter perspective risks superficiality and a lack of insight
- impress upon students that a key objective being assessed is the ability to skilfully construct a logically persuasive argument relating to political philosophy. It is insufficient for responses to simply espouse what advocates of the selected political philosophies would consider about an issue. Rather, students are required to justify, using careful reasoning and drawing on ideas from their two selected political philosophies, what *they* think about, in the case of the present question, the extent to which there is an obligation on the individual to support others in society.

Samples

Extended response

Effective student responses:

- used relevant terminology consistently and appropriately
- clearly explained a notion of obligation, in each selected political philosophy, that was plausible in all key aspects
- insightfully determined relationships within or between ideas relevant to each political philosophy to examine the notion of obligation
- provided a precise deconstruction of argument/s in the political philosophies that were relevant to the notion of obligation, accurately identifying premises and conclusion/s
- provided an insightful and justified evaluation of tenets of each political philosophy relevant to the notion of obligation
- used all appropriate criteria in the evaluation of arguments and claims
- skilfully constructed a cogent argument in response to the question, using both relevant philosophical ideas and the stimulus effectively to support the argument

- conveyed ideas and arguments in response 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 demonstrate an insightful determination of relationships within or between ideas relevant to social democracy to examine its notion of obligation. The response explicitly explains connections between the philosophy's understanding of concepts, including equality and freedom, and the maximin principle from Rawls's *justice as fairness* argument to illustrate the philosophy's conception of obligation.

Social democrats perceive humans as inherently social beings, who require state intervention to account for inequality arising from a competitive and free market. ~~This redistribution~~ Thus, justice is fairness, in which equality of opportunity and basic access to basic liberties are ensured. This is ^{achieved} seen through distributive justice such as progressive taxation, whereby higher income earners are taxed at higher rates (stimulus 1). This inequality aligns with the maximum principle, as it provides the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged citizens. Whilst it involves a reduction in negative freedom (imposed ^{state} removal of property), the increase in overall positive freedom takes precedence, as ~~the~~ the tax "fund[s] a range of public services". Therefore, in accordance with this, social democracy prescribes a strong obligation to support others, as a necessary means of ~~achieving~~ adhering to the ~~the~~ maximum principle. An ideal society ~~is~~ is one in which a certain baseline of living is achieved, which requires a redistribution of resources to support those without. Hence, under social democracy,

humans are unified by their shared communal and social nature, whereby societies are created for mutual individual advantage, ^{This is} ~~is~~ achieved by ~~or~~ the obligation to support others, ~~(e.g. as exemplified through progressive taxation)~~. ~~As~~ Therefore, premise 1 is accurate in asserting that, in alignment with social democratic principles, progressive taxation would be implemented and an obligation to support others would be enshrined to a strong extent.

This excerpt has been included:

- to illustrate a precise deconstruction of argument in the political philosophy (libertarianism) relevant to its notion of obligation. Precision is demonstrated through skilful use of the deductively valid form of modus tollens to present the argument. The argument accurately incorporates relevant libertarian ideas in its premises to analyse the philosophy's notion of obligation — the conceptual focus of the question.

This argument can be standardised as follows:

P1: If there's an individual obligation to support others in society, then individual economic freedoms must be relinquished.

P2: Individual economic freedoms must be maintained to protect both negative rights and free-market sanctity.

∴ There is no obligation on the individual to support others in society.

This is a validly constructed Modus Tollens argument, however the argument is not sound as the truth of all premises cannot be established. Premise 1's assertion, whilst correct

This excerpt has been included:

- to demonstrate an insightful and justified evaluation of the political philosophy (social democracy) relevant to its notion of obligation. In a prior part of the response, Rawls's *veil of ignorance* thought experiment and its resultant maximin principle is relied upon to justify a more robust obligation on individuals to support others via progressive taxation. In the excerpt, intellectual humility is exercised by acknowledging the potential shortcomings of the Rawlsian approach through questioning the assumptions upon which his thought experiment is based.

Despite this, its contention does pose problems to the soundness of its argument.

Most importantly, it claims that all humans are inherently self interested, in that they would select principles to maximise worst-case. This reductive view fails to account for alternate descriptions and the complexities of human motivation, that may render different decisions. Human ~~complex~~ motivation presents a multi-faceted depiction, in which altruism and alternate values may overplay this claimed self-interest.

Similarly, the veil of ignorance used to allegedly assess this self interest, requires a certain level of rationality and foresight that may not align with real human nature. Its hypothetical and abstract nature provides a concept that many humans may not interact with. & Along with this, cognitive biases of those unaccustomed to moral reasoning may convince individuals that they will personally fare better, leading to alternate choice than to maximise worst case. These ~~problems~~ ^{contradictions} of the immediate claims of social democracy prove problematic to the argument, as progressive tax aims to maximise worst-case. If this claim does not hold true for all individuals, the successive premises are problematic.

Additional advice

- The specifications for the summative external assessment in the Syllabus section 5.5.2 state that students will be required to compare and evaluate *two* political philosophies that have been studied in Unit 4 Topic 2: Political philosophy. Schools and students should not assume that any more than two political philosophies listed in Unit 4 Topic 2 will be provided on the assessment instrument each year. Students must choose from *only* those topics listed if there is an opportunity for choice.
- Teachers are encouraged to provide students with the opportunity to practise effective essay planning. This should involve students giving themselves time to think through the question and stimulus to formulate a clear central thesis to argue. Once this has been arrived at, students are better placed to organise their line of reasoning, including argument analysis (deconstructions) and evaluations, to guide their essay construction.