



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2012 Philosophy examination required students to have a detailed understanding of the set texts and a strong grasp of the basic skills of argument exposition and evaluation. Students were also required to ‘do philosophy’, in other words, to use their understanding of the arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts to thoughtfully engage with a general question. Although most students demonstrated a basic understanding of the concepts, arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts, many students did not have a precise and detailed understanding of these concepts, arguments and viewpoints. This was particularly the case with Nietzsche and Armstrong.

Areas of strength and weakness

Strengths

- Students were able to answer most exam questions.
- Many students demonstrated a good understanding of the style of question in Section B and were able to provide appropriate responses.

Weaknesses

- Many answers demonstrated only a vague understanding of the concepts, arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts. For example, in Question 4 of Section A, although most students could describe rights, obligations and needs, few students described how these related to each other. Similarly, in Question 3 of Section C, although many students could define dualism and materialism, few students provided arguments for these positions.
- Many students did not answer the exact question asked. For example, in Question 4 of Section A, many students evaluated the notions of rights, obligations or needs rather than Weil’s claims about their relationship to one another. In Question 1 of Section B, many students simply described Callicles’s and Weil’s likely responses to the stimulus as a whole rather than the College’s critique of the purely self-interested life.
- Students’ understanding of the concepts, arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts was sometimes inaccurate. For example, in Question 3 of Section A, many students interpreted the terms ‘well-born’ and ‘common man’ as describing economic status rather than as synonyms for the noble and the slave. In Question 2 of Section C, some students described Armstrong’s response to the objection from consciousness as his response to the problems presented by the two forms of behaviourism. In the essay, many students confused the terms ‘relations of ideas’ and ‘matters of fact’ and quite a number of students referred to ‘Hume’s views on science’.
- Many students could not identify a relevant contemporary debate in Question 3 of Section C.
- A significant number of students struggled to apply their understanding of the concepts, arguments and viewpoints expressed in the set texts to more generalised questions. For example, in Question 3 of Section C, many students struggled to discuss the implications of either materialism or dualism for a contemporary debate. In Section D, a substantial number of students were unable to plausibly relate the arguments and viewpoints expressed in the Unit 4 texts to the prompts.
- A significant number of students did not understand the instruction to critically compare and instead simply compared responses, evaluated one or more of the responses or stated which response they preferred. To adequately fulfil this task, students must identify similarities and differences between the texts and provide some comparative discussion of the merits and shortcomings of the arguments/viewpoints.
- A substantial number of students struggled with the directive to evaluate. Many students simply restated the argument, prefaced by the statement ‘I agree because’, while other students referred to their own beliefs as a means of justification (for example, ‘I disagree with Armstrong because I believe ...’). Other problems included evaluations based on substantial misunderstandings of the arguments, evaluations that focused on another aspect of the philosopher’s views rather than the given argument, evaluations that falsely attributed particular ideas or oversights to the philosopher (for example, ‘Aristotle does not provide a reason as to why we have a function’), and open questions or unrelated arguments to the opposite conclusion offered as evaluations. To correctly evaluate an argument, students need to identify a problem with the given argument, either in regard to the truth/plausibility of the propositions and/or whether or not the premises adequately support the conclusion, and then develop a response with reasons to show why it is a problem. If possible, students should use a counter-example to support their discussion. It would also be acceptable for a student to discuss the merits of the argument by providing reasons (again, if possible, supported by examples) that demonstrate the strength of particular propositions or to discuss both the merits and shortcomings in an argument before coming to a conclusion in regard to the strength of the argument. This latter approach is,



however, quite sophisticated. Students who attempt it must be careful not to provide answers that appear confused or contradictory.

- Many students' responses were poorly constructed, convoluted, long-winded and indiscriminate, imprecise or overwritten. It is important that students answer the question they are being asked and that their responses are clearly organised. Students may benefit from developing methods for constructing responses to different kinds of questions when preparing for the examination.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section A

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	23	36	23	18	1.4

- Philosophy's views never change, but rhetoric chops and changes according to what its audience wants to hear.
- Philosophy addresses questions that make it 'the finest work in the world', whereas rhetoric's concerns are less noble.
- Rhetoric is a 'knack' (when poetry, which is a knack, is stripped of its devices it is little more than popular oratory and popular oratory is another term for rhetoric). Whereas philosophy, which aims at the good (people's betterment), may be understood as an expertise.
- Philosophy has reasons. Rhetoric employs only habituated routine.
- Rhetoric is used to avoid punishment, but it is in the individual's best interests to be punished for wrongdoing. We might assume that philosophy is not used for such ends.

Possible points for evaluation included the following.

- Socrates concedes one good purpose to rhetoric – namely to ensure that our friends are punished for their crimes. On Socrates' views of wrongdoing and punishment, such an end is desirable.
- Socrates allows that a rhetorical expert might use his intelligence to improve people morally and that a genuine rhetorician must be a moral person.
- Callicles reminds us that philosophy can have undesirable ends – namely, making us incompetent in a court of law and preventing us from participation in the political life of the polis, where a man 'earns distinction'.
- The history of philosophy contests Socrates's claim that philosophy remains static.
- Rhetoric can be, and often is, used for noble ends; for example Martin Luther King, Jr's 'I Have a Dream' speech.

Most students identified one of the reasons why Socrates believed philosophy to be superior to rhetoric; however, many students struggled to evaluate the claim. Those who did evaluate it often pointed out that rhetoric can be used for noble ends, but did not develop this response with a much-needed example, thereby providing an incomplete evaluation.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to provide one of the reasons listed above and a developed evaluation (an evaluative point or points and reasons to support them) against this reason.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Socrates believes philosophy is superior to rhetoric because rhetoric is merely a form of flattery where the performer seeks to please the audience rather than enhance their lives. The rhetorician tells them what they wish to hear. Conversely the practice of philosophy enables one to develop an ordered soul and mind, necessary for a good life. However this argument is not necessarily true as often those who practice rhetoric are doing so in order to achieve goodness and to empower their audience into acting in more accepting ways, promoting goodness and equality. Martin Luther King and An Sung Su Ki are such examples of rhetoricians who aim at the good.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	34	23	20	14	10	1.4



- The nature of the chief good (*eudaimonia*) may be understood by considering our function, as good resides in function.
- Carpenters, tanners, etc. have functions, so humans must have one too.
- Again, each of our body parts has a function, so the whole human must have one too.
- Our function is peculiar to humans. This rules out nutrition and growth (which we share with plants) and perception (which we share with animals).
- Aristotle therefore concludes that what is left is an activity of the element possessing a rational principle.
- A function is performed well when it is performed with the appropriate excellence.

Alternative answers included the following.

- To do anything virtuously requires it to be done in an excellent way (a good lute player is one who plays the lute well).
- Virtue necessarily implies action, for virtue (according to Aristotle) can only exist in praxis.
- A good life comes about through the development of a virtuous state of character, which is itself a product of habituation towards choosing the mean or virtuous action.
- Further to the above, a good life is achieved when one exercises their unique human function, which can be done in the field of virtue where one uses reason to find the mean between two extremes.
- Because other candidates for the good life do not fulfil the criteria of the Good: pleasure is the life of beasts; honour is neither self-sufficient or a final end; virtue can be experienced while asleep and is compatible with misfortune; and money making is a means, thus not a final end.

Possible points for evaluation included the following.

- Could there be human goods that are apart from any function we may have?
- Carpenters and tanners have their functions because of social needs or desires. Humans come about biologically and may not therefore have a function in the same way.
- What is true of each part is not necessarily true of the whole (the fallacy of composition).
- Why must our function (that which forms the basis of the good life) be peculiar to us? What if Martians or dolphins turn out to be as rational as we are? Would that affect the criteria of a good human life?
- Is rationality unique to humans? And what if the activity that is unique to humans were something different; for example, dancing or making war?

Although the majority of students identified one or two of the premises or arguments for the claim, a number of students simply responded by describing the mean. Many students either did not evaluate one of the premises or arguments, evaluated points not raised in the expositive component of the question or provided incomplete evaluations. A significant number of students falsely attributed particular oversights to Aristotle in their evaluation (for example, 'Aristotle does not provide reasons as to why we have a function' or 'Aristotle does not provide reasons as to why our function should be reason').

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to identify two premises or arguments and provide a developed evaluation of one of these premises or arguments.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response. Although it does contain an inaccuracy ('*reason ... can be exercised by exhibiting virtue*'), it is still a very good response.

Aristotle states that good lies in unique function, and for humans, this is reason. Reason is needed to respond accurately to passions, and this is what the virtuous man does. He enjoys his life, as he is an expert. As such, the virtuous life is a good life. These points combine to suggest that the good life requires excellence in the field of reason and this can be exercised by exhibiting virtue. This argument is somewhat problematic as reason is not unique to humans; chimpanzees can use acquired language creatively and rationally for example. This suggests that our function may not be reason. If this is so, our good life does not rely on its exercise.

2012 Assessment Report



Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	32	23	24	15	6	1.4

- Nietzsche says that the well-born see their happiness as natural, not constructed in comparison to others, and as active. The happiness of the common man, infected by *ressentiment*, is constructed in reaction to other people and the outside world. The common man's conception of happiness is essentially passive, a matter of peace and relaxation, tranquillity, a 'narcotic'.
- For the well-born, happiness proceeds from a triumphant yes-saying and the capacity to self-legislate, whereas the slave's happiness evolves from a reactive no-saying.
- The forgetfulness (instinct) of the well-born helps them to avoid *ressentiment*, leading to a form of contentment. In contrast, the common man is characterised by a kind of insatiability that stems from his cleverness.

Possible points for evaluation included the following.

- One might question the fact that Nietzsche seems to approve of one kind of happiness (well-born) and disapprove of the other (common man).
- Perhaps Nietzsche has created a false distinction. Isn't all happiness founded on freedom from resentment and ill-feeling? Also, despite Nietzsche's claims regarding the well-born's affirmation of life, surely no one feels happy when they experience negative emotions.
- Further, we might question the accuracy of the descriptions of each kind of happiness.

Many students appeared to find this question challenging. A significant number of students did not address the question properly or misinterpreted the terms used in the question, describing the happiness of the well-born as resulting from their social status or wealth and the happiness of the common man as resulting from the fact that he only had access to the 'simple things in life'. This misinterpretation led to further problems in evaluation; many students suggested that the joys of the common man were better than those of the well-born or that the well-born might experience unhappiness in spite of his wealth. Of those students who did not misinterpret the terminology, a significant number did not address the 'distinction' in their evaluation.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to clearly describe the difference between the conceptions of happiness held by the well-born and the common man and provide a developed evaluation of this distinction.

The following response contains an excellent description of the different views of happiness held by the well-born and the common man. While this is an example of a high-scoring response, the evaluation could be made stronger through the use of examples that more precisely reflect the claims made by Nietzsche regarding the characteristics of each form of happiness or by better directing the examples to the claims.

The 'well-born' behave spontaneously in reaction to their lives, and are able to expel negativity through action. The 'common man' on the other hand is oppressed and cannot expel negativity, leading to 'ressentiment' which causes them to evaluate the 'well-born' and their happiness as bad, and everything else as good. The only form of happiness they feel is a 'narcotic' contentedness. This distinction has some strength, as it is common for people in oppressive situations to develop depression, limiting their ability to feel happiness. Furthermore, 'contentedness' cannot be considered happiness as this feeling is possible in a comatose or unconscious state. Whereas the happiness felt by the well-born is genuinely 'felt' by them in the sphere of action. As such, this distinction has some merit.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	26	27	25	14	7	1.5

Weil tells us that obligations are prior to rights. It is the recognition of our obligations to others that make rights effectual. Obligations are demonstrated through the fulfilment of our earthly needs (body and spirit).

Possible points for evaluation included the following.

- Are obligations really prior to rights? Perhaps we have certain natural rights (for example, the right to life) and our obligations proceed from these. Thus, rights define our obligations and make our obligations effectual.
- Does Weil adequately justify the unconditional pre-requisite of obligation from which we identify rights and act to fulfil the needs of others?

2012 Assessment Report



Although a significant number of students were able to describe the relationship between rights, obligations and needs, many students simply described each of these things separately and did not describe how they are related. Other students simply restated the question ('they are related'). Many students did not include evaluation in their responses and, of those who did, many evaluated one of the concepts (for example, needs) and not the relationship.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to explain Weil's account of how rights, obligations and needs relate to each other and provide a developed evaluation of this account.

Although it contains some inaccuracies (for example, 'There is no evidence to suggest that these obligations exist ...'), the following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Weil believes that rights are ineffectual without and subordinate to the obligations to which they correspond. All human beings, by virtue only of being human have certain needs of the soul, which can only be fulfilled when others recognize their own obligations that stem from respect towards them. This person will then hold rights, but only through the recognition by others of their own obligations towards them. However Weil's position, although intrinsically and perhaps pragmatically appealing, is not grounded in a factual basis. There is no evidence to suggest that these obligations exist at all and that they are essential to rights. One may recognize the right to let someone live a life of freedom, without recognizing an obligation of respecting them or of equality. Thus rights do not necessarily rely upon obligations to be recognised.

Section B

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	5	6	15	18	29	18	9	3.5

- Callicles argues for hedonistic self-interest in accordance with 'natural law'. This implies that Callicles would reject Kookaburra College's views regarding hedonism on the grounds that it is unnatural, limiting of the individual's potential and hardly the recipe for a good life.
- Weil has ideals above hedonism and wants us to have respect for all others (as well as ourselves), which is demonstrated via the fulfilment of obligations. For Weil, a healthy society is one in which obligations are recognised and the spiritual and physical needs of the individual are fulfilled. Thus, she would most likely support Kookaburra College's rejection of hedonism and its privileging of the needs of others. Given her views about private property, she may support Kookaburra College's claim that 'an ethically reflective life does not forbid ... enjoying material pleasures, but it may shift our perspective'.

Possible points for critical comparison included the following.

- Callicles's rejection of the views espoused by the College is based on certain suppositions about human nature. We might consider the plausibility of these suppositions and whether these suppositions are more or less credible than Weil's view that humans have certain internally compelling obligations towards others.
- In light of Kookaburra College's claims regarding self-interest, and in recognition of Socrates's view that hedonism represents a kind of enslavement, we might ask whether Callicles's view is more or less limiting to the individual than Weil's.
- We might also consider which view – Callicles's life of self-interest or Weil's rejection of self-interest – would actually produce a better life.

Rather than discussing how each philosopher might respond to the College's critique of the purely self-interested life, a significant number of students instead discussed how each philosopher would respond to the stimulus more generally. Of those students who did respond appropriately to the question, most were able to accurately describe Callicles's likely response and many were able to describe Weil's likely response. However, a number of students did not provide reasons as to why each philosopher might respond in the identified way. Most students struggled with the directive to critically compare. A significant number of students did not engage with this aspect of the question at all and of those who did, the majority compared the responses, evaluated one of the responses or explained which response they preferred/agreed with and why.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to compare Callicles's and Weil's likely responses to the College's critique of the purely self-interested life and provide some account of why they might respond in this way. Students also needed to provide some critical comparison of these views.



Although the expression could be clearer, the following is an example of a high-scoring response. It is particularly notable for the way in which the student has engaged in a detailed comparison of the two thinkers.

Callicles is likely to respond negatively to Kookaburra College's critique of the purely self-interested life. Through his promotions of a hedonistic life because he believes pleasure is good, Callicles would argue that we should do what makes us feel pleasure, such as own the latest phone. Regardless that this is a fallacy because what is true in nature does not mean it is right in society. Dissimilarly, Weil would agree with Kookaburra College's extract and claim it is important to acknowledge our obligations to other people. This highlights a significant point of difference between the philosophers. Callicles does not place any importance on the community; he believes the strong deserve more than the weak, and that the strong ought to take from the weak, and as such, the needs of the starving are irrelevant to him. For Weil however, she believes our happiness relies greatly on the health of our community rather than independently. And as such, she would believe that the community service activities that Kookaburra College offer are fundamentally beneficial. Moreover, Callicles does not promote self-discipline, and would argue against the school promoting it, as this may result in a life fit for a 'stone or corpse', who does not need anything to be happy. Callicles thinks we should let our desires expand. Yet it seems to me that unrestrained fulfillment of pleasure can lead to negative results such as unrestrained drug use leading to death. Rather, moderated and restrained doses of pleasure may be more likely to lead us to the good life. Weil however, would argue that the college is right in promoting self-discipline because it allows us to accord to our needs of the soul. That is, because she has antithetical pairs of needs of the soul, self-discipline aids us not to lean too greatly to one need rather than the other, and self-discipline helps us arrive at healthy moderation.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	11	15	25	24	25	2.4

- Aristotle favours balance and harmony between (virtuous) self-interest and the common good. The fact that Aristotle advocates the mean also suggests that he would respond favourably to the idea of a balanced life.
- Aristotle notes that it is important to be involved in the operation of one's society, thereby working to increase the good for everybody. This implies that there needs to be a balance between self and society.
- Nietzsche might disagree with this as he believes that the individual should not be diminished by the herd and its morality, which such sentiments represent.
- However, Nietzsche may agree with the sentiments as long as the students arrive at those ideals by themselves.

Many students appeared to struggle with this question. A number of students simply restated the question ('Aristotle would agree with a balanced life') or concentrated only on the concept of balance generally rather than the version of it expressed in the quotation. Of those students who answered the question appropriately, most were able to accurately describe Nietzsche's likely response, but many struggled to describe Aristotle's likely response.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to describe how each philosopher would respond to the version of the balanced life expressed in the quotation.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Aristotle champions the virtue of the mean. While this is directly applied to virtues and vices it seems logical to extend it to all aspects of life. Aristotle also believes that 'man is born for citizenship' which entails a concern with the wellbeing of one's community. Nietzsche would not object to the notion of a balanced life so long as it was in good faith. The noble morality would see one actively maximizing wellbeing rather than dwelling on things you don't have. Genuine pursuit of wellbeing would have to be spontaneous and life affirming.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	1	3	18	33	29	15	3.3

This question required students to make a judgment and to provide reasons for that judgment. Although many students were able to appropriately justify their response, a significant number of students simply restated from the stimulus (for example, 'I would send my child ... because I believe in self-respect and self-discipline'), referred to their own opinion or referred to the views of philosophers without further justification (for example, 'I wouldn't send my child ... because, as Callicles says, the life of self-discipline is the life of a stone or corpse'). A small number of students missed the point of the question altogether and instead dismissed the descriptor as typical of the 'spin' schools use to market themselves.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to provide an answer (yes/no/perhaps) and a justification for this answer that made some reference to the merits/shortcomings of the school's values as expressed in the stimulus.



The following is an example of a high-scoring response. Although the student has used an 'I agree' statement, he/she has further developed his/her position.

I would consider it, because I agree with the values of recognizing the importance of all kinds of life and constantly striving to become better people and make the world a better place through kindness and compassion. After all, if we can make the world a better place, everyone has more chance of living a good life. It would improve collectivities everywhere and the majority would be able to live the good life rather than the minority.

Section C

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	18	29	19	15	19	1.9

Descartes reasons that even if an evil genius is deceiving him in many things, he must at least be thinking, or conscious, in order to be deceived. And if he is thinking, he must exist. As he puts it elsewhere, *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I exist).

Possible points of evaluation included the following.

- If an evil genius can deceive him even on such things as $2 + 3 = 5$, as he implies in the 'First Meditation', what about the logic of the *cogito*?
- Rather than inferring his existence, it would seem more accurate for Descartes to infer that 'there are thoughts'. Do thoughts need a thinker?
- If memory can deceive him, can he be sure that the 'I' who now thinks is the same 'I' who thought previously? If not, how substantial is the knowledge provided by the *cogito*?
- Descartes might be accused of 'begging the question' as the 'I' we encounter in 'I think' is supposed to be demonstrated in 'I exist' (however, as Russell pointed out, the first part of the claim need only be 'there are thoughts').
- Kierkegaard claimed that the conclusion of existence is logically trivial given that the *cogito* already presupposes existence. In other words, existence is presupposed for thinking to occur, thus existence cannot be derived from that thinking.

Many students were able to accurately outline Descartes' case for this conclusion; however, a number of students incorrectly described either the argument for essence ('I am a thing that thinks') or the wax argument. Although many students gave an appropriate evaluation, a significant number of students did not develop their evaluation beyond this point.

To receive full marks for the question, students needed to accurately outline the identified argument and provide a developed evaluation of this argument.

Although the second part of the evaluation is less relevant than the first, the following is an example of a high-scoring response. Students did not have to provide the same degree of detail in the outline to receive a high score.

Descartes considers, by employing his method of radical doubt, that the only thing he can be certain of is his own existence. He considers that as his senses have deceived him in the past they may be now so he cannot be sure of anything he experiences through the senses. Because this is the case he postulates that an 'evil demon' may be deceiving him, however he considers that even if this is the case and perhaps virtually all of his former beliefs are false, something must be being deceived, and something must be conducting this thinking, therefore he concludes that because he is, he exists. However, this conclusion is problematic as the fact thinking is occurring does not necessarily entail that he exists. This 'I' he postulates may not be existing at all, all he really knows is that thinking is occurring. Also, Descartes' position that everything around him may not exist is highly impractical. Surely we must ignore this assertion to lead functional lives.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	35	22	14	12	9	7	1.6

Armstrong rejects crude (traditional) behaviourism, which identifies mental processes with outward behaviour, as it doesn't account for the fact that we can have the latter without the former (for example, we can experience anger without showing any bodily sign). The more sophisticated (Rylean) form of behaviourism identifies mental states with 'dispositions to behave'. Armstrong rejects this on the grounds that it ignores the fact that when I experience a mental



state I am aware of something actually going on within me, it's not just that I would behave in a certain way **if** some event were to occur.

Armstrong's own view is that a mental state is an inner state that, in certain circumstances, brings about certain behaviour. This avoids both problems above: the mental state can occur without the behaviour, and it is an actual occurrence. He also adds that these inner states are physical in nature.

A significant number of students struggled to answer all aspects of this question accurately. Although many students could identify Armstrong's reason for rejecting crude behaviourism, a significant number couldn't explain his reason for rejecting Ryle's behaviourism. Many students, rather than picking up on the fact that Armstrong rejects each for a different reason, simply said that he rejects both because 'they don't account for the fact that I am angry without showing it' or 'they ignore that something is going on in me'. Other common answers to this part of the question included that Armstrong rejects both on the grounds that they 'do not explain consciousness' or that they do not explain 'how actors behave in a way that is different to how they feel'. Many students also had problems describing how Armstrong sees his own position as overcoming these problems. Many students simply stated his view of mind, or said that mind may be understood as the physico-chemical workings of the brain, without saying how such views link in with the rejection of the two forms of behaviourism. A significant number of students cited Armstrong's response to the objection of consciousness as his means of overcoming the problems of behaviourism.

To receive full marks for this question, students had to accurately identify the reason why Armstrong rejects each form of behaviourism, and describe Armstrong's position and how it overcomes the problems of the two forms of behaviourism.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The first rejected form of behaviourism dictates that mind is synonymous to behaviour. This is rejected on the fact that there can be 'mind states', thoughts, without attendant behaviour. The second form of rejected behaviourism involves the Rylean notion of 'dispositions' – explained by the analogy of glass, glass is brittle, it has a disposition to break under certain conditions. Likewise, humans have a disposition to behave. Armstrong rejects this as it denies a phenomena of feeling that we're all well aware of. His solution is founded upon science: dispositions are changes in the substance of the object apt for producing a range of behaviour. As such, chemical changes occur in the brain that are apt for producing behaviour but don't necessarily have to, repairing the flaws with the two previous theories.

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	27	38	1.1

Descartes

- Descartes argues that he cannot be certain that he has a body, but his doubt demonstrates he exists, thus his mind and body are different (one can be doubted, the other cannot).
- Descartes does not know that he has a body. He knows only that he is a 'thinking thing', so he is strictly only the latter.
- In observing the changes of wax applied to flame, Descartes concludes that his mind is better known than his body.

Armstrong

- Armstrong appeals to the authority of science, justified by its ability to reach consensus, and science increasingly accepts the materialist view of human beings. A more specific argument he gives is that mental states are the causes of certain behaviour, modern science sees physico-chemical processes in the central nervous system as the sole causes of the relevant behaviour, so mental states may be identified with those processes.

Although many students were able to accurately describe an argument for one of the two positions, a significant number of students simply stated what either dualism or materialism was, rather than following the directives of the question.

To receive full marks for this question, students had to provide an argument for one of the identified positions.

2012 Assessment Report



The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Descartes suggests that because he can know for certain that his mind exists and is a thinking thing (as even if he is being deceived something must be being deceived and to consider this possibility he must be thinking and a thinking thing) and cannot know his body exists he concludes he is only a thinking thing and his mind is separate from his body and can exist without extension.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	44	26	30	0.9

Possible points for evaluation included the following.

Descartes

- In arguing that he knows only that he is a thinking thing, Descartes appears to commit the ‘masked man’ fallacy: I know that the masked man is here, but I do not know my father is here, so the masked man cannot be my father. Just as the masked man might have an identity (my father) of which I am unaware, so Descartes’ nature, or essence, might contain things of which he is unaware (for example, a body).
- Is the wax actually known only through the intellect? It would seem more plausible that a connection between solid and melted wax is produced through observation.
- If the mind and body are different, as Descartes suggests, how is it that they are able to interact? And how is it that changes to the brain can also cause changes to the mind (for example, head injuries, the use of drugs, etc.).

Armstrong

- Science may achieve consensus in its own field, but does this give it authority in others, such as philosophy, which asks questions beyond the scope of science?
- In particular, is science competent to assure us that the sole causes of our behaviour are physical? Are there reasons for thinking that mental states are not physical?
- Is consensus enough to grant that a field provides ‘the best explanation’? There are countless examples of consensus that have not provided the best explanation.

Although many students were able to provide accurate evaluations, a significant number of students appeared unsure of the directive to evaluate and simply elaborated on the argument provided in part a. or provided a contrary statement. Many students provided an evaluation for something other than the argument provided in part a.

To receive full marks for this question, students had to provide a developed evaluation for the argument identified in Question 3a.

The following high-scoring response follows on from the student example for Question 3a.

Descartes’ reasoning here is fallacious as he commits the masked man fallacy by suggesting what he does know (his mind) is necessarily different to and separate from what he does not know (his body). This is akin to suggesting that because I know Paul but do not know the masked man. Paul is therefore not the masked man. This is fallacious as Paul may very well be the masked man.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	46	25	29	0.8

This part of the question invited students to identify a relevant contemporary debate and discuss what implications the argument they outlined in part a. would have for this contemporary debate. Examples of relevant contemporary debates included the following.

- the possibility of life after death
- animal rights
- the possibility of artificial intelligence and/or ‘robot rights’
- abortion

Many students appeared unsure of what constituted a contemporary debate and instead either discussed the arguments further or engaged with the argument evaluatively. Of those students who did provide a relevant contemporary debate,

2012 Assessment Report



many did not discuss it in terms of implications but instead used it evaluatively or simply engaged in a discussion of that debate.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to identify a relevant contemporary debate and describe the implications of the argument outlined in Question 3a. for this contemporary debate.

The following high-scoring response was drawn from the same paper as the examples provided for Questions 3a. and 3b.

Descartes' conclusion that the mind and body are separate and his mind is immaterial has the implication that we cannot create artificial intelligence that will ever be able to truly replicate the human mind as it is not purely physical. It also means that purely physical medical procedures on the brain would be unable to completely cure or affect a person's mental stability or state as part or all of the mind is in fact immaterial.

Section D

Question chosen	None	1	2	3
%	3	24	43	30

Essay

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Average
%	7	4	7	9	11	13	12	9	8	5	4	3	4	2	2	1	5.9

This section of the examination appeared challenging for most students. A significant number of students had difficulty crafting responses that addressed the requirements of their chosen question. Many students simply outlined the arguments expressed by the philosophers rather than using these arguments to support a response to the prompt. Some students appeared to have prepared responses, which they employed despite the fact their response did not directly address the prompt. Many students exhibited either an inaccurate or rudimentary understanding of the philosophers' arguments. Many students falsely attributed certain beliefs to the philosophers (for example, 'Hume's views on science') or confused terminology (for example, 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact').

Most students chose to write on all three philosophers. Of the three, Hume was probably the best understood, despite the problems identified above. Nevertheless, very few students acknowledged Hume's recognition of the usefulness of inductive reasoning despite its limitations, and many students who were able to describe the problem of induction did not discuss the implications of it for knowledge.

The most significant issue most students had with Popper was knowing what material was most relevant to the question. Many students simply summarised the problem of demarcation and Popper's solution to it without engaging with the prompt. In terms of understanding, a significant number of students did not accurately grasp the concept of falsification, and many students did not understand Popper's views regarding science and knowledge.

Kuhn was perhaps the least understood of the three philosophers. Many students had an inaccurate understanding of his views regarding scientific progress and the relationship between science and certainty, and a significant number believed that for a paradigm to be accepted it needed to be accepted by the wider, general society. Many students appeared to have a confused understanding of Kuhn's sustained comparison between political and scientific revolution.

In Question 1, although many students engaged plausibly with the notion of certainty, most students had difficulty engaging with the second half of the question. Of those who did, many were able to plausibly discuss it in terms of Hume but very few in terms of Popper or Kuhn.

Many students who chose Question 2 were able to plausibly discuss the question in terms of the philosophers. However, responses to this question included some significant misinterpretations of Kuhn and his views regarding science and progress, and of Popper's views regarding falsification and the relationship between falsification and certainty.

Many students appeared to find Question 3 challenging and had difficulty relating the philosophical arguments to the prompt. Particularly surprising, given the obvious applicability of the arguments to the prompt, was the difficulty many students had discussing Hume's ideas in relation to it.

It is not possible to anticipate all acceptable responses to essay questions. The questions do, however, imply that all essays will engage at some level in a critical discussion of the relevant set texts and produce a reasoned judgment about

2012 Assessment Report



the arguments and viewpoints within the context of a response that engages, first and foremost, with the question/prompt provided. All essays should contain some kind of exposition – either of arguments, viewpoints or concepts – provide **evaluations** of these arguments, viewpoints and concepts, and use concrete counter-examples.

Below are the criteria with which all essays were assessed.

Expression

- Did the student present the argument in an organised way?
- How clear and precise was the language used by the student?
- To what extent was the language appropriate to philosophy?

Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach level 1.
- 1 The student expressed some basic ideas but it was not always clear what the argument was trying to convey. The use of language was not appropriate to philosophy.
- 2 The student presented some ideas in an organised manner. There was some clarity of expression, but the argument could not always be followed. The use of language was not always appropriate to philosophy.
- 3 The student presented ideas in an organised way and the development of the argument could be followed easily. The use of language was appropriate to philosophy.
- 4 The student expressed ideas in a clear and coherent way and insights were clearly articulated. The use of language was effective and appropriate to philosophy.
- 5 The student presented ideas in a coherent and incisive way, insights were clearly articulated and the argument was focused and sustained. The use of language was precise and fully appropriate to philosophy.

Knowledge and understanding

- To what extent did the student demonstrate knowledge of philosophical issues?
- How well had the student understood philosophical arguments and concepts?

Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach level 1.
- 1 The student demonstrated a superficial knowledge of philosophical issues but there was only limited understanding of the concepts used.
- 2 The student demonstrated some knowledge of philosophical issues and there was a basic understanding of the concepts used.
- 3 The student demonstrated a secure knowledge of philosophical issues, and concepts were generally understood.
- 4 The student demonstrated a wide-ranging knowledge of philosophical issues, which were used effectively to support arguments. Philosophical arguments and concepts were largely understood.
- 5 The student demonstrated knowledge that was comprehensive and in-depth, and was used incisively to support arguments. Philosophical arguments and concepts were fully understood.

Identification and analysis of relevant material

- How well did the student understand the specific demands of the question?
- To what extent did the student provide relevant supporting material?
- To what extent did the student provide appropriate examples?
- How effectively did the student analyse the supporting material?

2012 Assessment Report



Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach level 1.
- 1–2 The student showed little awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material in a limited way. There was little analysis and few or no examples were given.
- 3–4 The student showed some awareness of the specific demands of the question and identified and analysed some relevant material. Some appropriate examples were used.
- 5–6 The student showed a good understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified material that was nearly always relevant. There was a sound analysis of this material. Examples were appropriate and gave support to the argument.
- 7–8 The student showed a clear understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified relevant material that was analysed in a thoughtful way. Examples directly supported the overall argument in a persuasive manner. Some counter-arguments were presented.
- 9–10 The student showed a full understanding of the specific demands of the question and identified material that was always relevant. The implications of this material were drawn out in a detailed analysis. Examples were well chosen and compelling in their support of the argument. Counter-arguments were presented in a convincing way.

Development and evaluation

- Did the student develop the argument in a coherent way?
- How well did the student test ideas and arguments?
- To what extent did the student express a relevant, personal response?

Achievement level

- 0 The student did not reach level 1.
- 1 The student developed ideas and arguments in a basic way but there was little or no evaluation.
- 2 The student developed some ideas and arguments but the development was simple, or was asserted without support or reference. There may have been some basic evaluation of the ideas and arguments.
- 3 The student developed ideas and arguments in a sound way and there was a consistent attempt to evaluate them, even if this was not fully developed.
- 4 The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was thoughtful and convincing.
- 5 The student developed ideas and arguments from a consistently held and well-justified perspective. Evaluation of the ideas and arguments was compelling or subtle, with strong evidence of personal reflection.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Question 2.

Philosophers David Hume and Karl Popper would both agree with the claim that 'the possibility of disproof is the crucial factor in the quest for certainty'. However, they would do so in radically different ways. In contemporary society we constantly engage in a 'quest for certainty' through our reliance on science and related fields to provide answers and solutions to the great questions of our day; from how to cure cancer to how to solve climate change. As such, it is necessary to engage with all aspects of this 'quest', including the impact of disproof on its achievement. In this essay I will outline the arguments that indicate both Hume and Popper's potential responses before investigating their strength in order to find whose stance would be the most compelling.

In David Hume's 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding', his aim is to discover how we know 'matters of fact' – knowledge gained a posteriori – as opposed to 'relations of ideas' – knowledge garnered a priori. He finds that we gain 'matters of fact' through experience – observations of cause and effect relationships. Through an investigation into various examples, such as the movement of billiard balls, he finds that this cause and effect relationship must always be arbitrary. This is because there is nothing inherent in an object that will indicate its effect. We simply predict the outcome based on prior experience. However, this is problematic as 'matters of fact', not being gained a priori, can always entertain their logical contradiction. In the 'analogy of bread' Hume investigates this problem further. We imbue things with 'secret powers': bread has a nourishing power, as nothing about their nature alludes to these abilities. We predict that bread will nourish us because we infer a cause and effect relationship from events in the past. This can never be guaranteed, however, as 'matters of fact' can always entertain their logical contradiction. Therein lies the 'problem of induction'; no amount of instances will ever prove or predict a matter of fact.

The implications of Hume's argument are that, due to the possibility of logical contradiction, of disproof, matters of fact cannot provide certainty. This throws the entire realm of physical knowledge, encompassing science and all related fields who utilize induction into considerable doubt. These fields are the contemporary manifestation of our 'quest for certainty', and Hume's arguments seem to suggest that it is futile in the face of the problem of induction.

Karl Popper, on the other hand, interprets the possibility of 'disproof' as a strength. As a solution to the problem of demarcation between science and pseudo-science, he describes science as progressing upon a falsificationist principle of conjecture and



refutation in which theories about the world are boldly proposed and then discarded if faced with a falsification. The testability, falsifiability and refutability of a theory is what characterizes it as scientific, and this results in robust theories, as only the most accurate can survive such a rigorous process akin to natural selection. This is because, as demonstrated by his investigation into contemporaneous theories, these criteria result in theories that make specific and risky proposals about reality, resulting in more meaningful claims. This is demonstrated by the 'risky prediction' of Einstein's Theory of relativity compared with, for example, the great 'explanatory power' (and broadness) of Adlerian psychology, which can account for seemingly all human behaviour. Popper does agree with Hume that 'valid induction is a myth', however falsificationism provides a rational alternative where there is none. Popper describes science as characterized by the 'critical attitude' – the provisional acceptance of robust theories coupled with the desire to test, refute and falsify. Popper claims that, in light of the ultimately indiscernible nature of physical reality, a critical attitude towards robust theories produced by falsificationism is entirely rational, as it is impossible to demand rational proofs from something so ultimately unknowable.

The ramifications of Popper's arguments are resolutely more positive for our 'quest for knowledge' than Hume's. 'Disproofs' about reality, about theories, result in the robust process of conjecture and refutation. Whilst attitudes about reality are inherently unattainable, the falsificationist process yields the most available accuracy in gleaning them. As such, our 'quest for certainty' is not irrational under Popper's arguments, and is in fact the most rational course of action.

Hume's problem of induction is forceful in that it is true that we cannot perceive the necessary connections in nature. However, the problem of induction does deny the well-evidenced principle of uniformity. Just because we are unable to perceive necessary connexions, doesn't mean they don't exist. For example, mercury has never boiled below 365.5c at standard pressure. Such pieces of evidence suggest that cause and effect relationships do exist, and to deny such consistent evidence on a purely logical basis would seem remiss as a result. Furthermore, as Hume distinguishes between types of knowledge, surely there could be a differentiation between the types of truths that these two sets produce. It is unfair to demand rational certainty from the broad, uncertain realm of matters of fact. As a result, it seems that Hume's problem of induction, whilst presenting a serious problem for the inductive process, denies too much of reality to completely erode it.

The strength of Popper's falsificationism lies in the fact that falsehoods about the world can be deduced from single instances. For example, upon observing a black swan one could falsify the theory that all swans are white. However, in reality, scientific theories are much more complicated than this. As explained by the Duhem-Quine thesis, any number of incorrect assumptions in the premises of a theory can lead to an erroneous falsification. For example, incorrect assumptions about his scientific instruments led to Tycho Brahe incorrectly falsifying Copernican astronomy. This suggests that, whilst logically forceful, falsificationism fails to comprehensively provide accurate information about what we can know for certain isn't true about reality. Furthermore, it can be argued that falsificationism only provides 'negative information' about reality – about what isn't – and brings us no closer to what is. As such, falsificationism's real ability to produce 'robust theories' is somewhat questionable.

In light of these investigations I must conclude that disproofs certainly play a very important role in our quest for certainty, as both argument sets strongly suggest this. However Hume's attitude that the possible existence of disproofs negates the possibility of certitudes seems somewhat questionable when the principle of uniformity is taken into account. On the other hand, disproofs seem inadequate at comprehensively providing Popper's falsificationism with enough strength to support its assertions that disproofs can aid in the understanding of reality. As such, I must further conclude that the existence of disproofs must be taken into consideration, however neither argumentative case is strong enough to prove them either as a useful tool, as Popper would state, nor as an insurmountable problem, as Hume suggests.