Examination specifications

Overall conditions

The examination will be sat at a time and date to be set annually by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook.

There will be 15 minutes reading time and 2 hours writing time.

The examination will be assessed by a panel appointed by the VCAA.

The examination will contribute 50 per cent to the study score.

Content

The VCE Philosophy Study Design 2014–2018 is the document for the development of the examination. All outcomes in Units 3 and 4 will be examined.

All of the key knowledge and skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

Format

The examination will be in the form of a question and answer book. It may include questions that refer to written or visual stimulus material.

The examination will consist of three sections.

Section A will consist of written-response questions derived from both Units 3 and 4. The number of questions may vary from year to year.

Section B will consist of two extended-response questions derived from Unit 3.

Section C will consist of three essay questions derived from Unit 4. Students should attempt one of the essay questions.

Each section of the examination will be worth 20 marks.

The total marks for the examination will be 60.

Criteria

Student essays will be assessed against the following criteria:

• knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, viewpoints, arguments and debates relevant to the topic
• critical evaluation of ideas and arguments relevant to the topic
• selection and use of relevant material and appropriate examples to support the response
• development of a coherent and well-reasoned response that addresses the specific demands of the topic
• use of clear and precise language appropriate to philosophy

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Approved materials and equipment

Normal stationery requirements (pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, sharpeners and rulers)

Relevant references

The following documents should be referred to in relation to the VCE Philosophy examination:

- VCE Philosophy Study Design 2014–2018
- VCE Philosophy Advice for Teachers 2014–2018
- VCE Philosophy Assessment Handbook 2014–2018
- Prescribed texts for VCE Philosophy for the relevant year
- VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET

Advice

During the 2014–2018 accreditation period for VCE Philosophy, examinations will be prepared according to the examination specifications above. Each examination will conform to these specifications and will test a representative sample of the key knowledge and skills.

The following sample examination provides an indication of the type and range of questions teachers and students can expect on the VCE Philosophy examination during the accreditation period. The VCAA does not publish answers for sample examinations.
PHILOSOPHY

Written examination

Day Date
Reading time: *.* to *.* (15 minutes)
Writing time: *.* to *.* (2 hours)

QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOK

Structure of book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Number of questions</th>
<th>Number of questions to be answered</th>
<th>Number of marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Students are permitted to bring into the examination room: pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, sharpeners and rulers.
• Students are NOT permitted to bring into the examination room: blank sheets of paper and/or white out liquid/tape.
• No calculator is allowed in this examination.

Materials supplied
• Question and answer book of 16 pages.
• Additional space is available at the end of the book if you need extra paper to complete an answer.

Instructions
• Write your student number in the space provided above on this page.
• All written responses must be in English.

Students are NOT permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any other unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.
SECTION A

Instructions for Section A
Answer all four questions.

Question 1 (6 marks)
a. Outline Descartes’s example of the hats and coats.  

b. How does this example support Descartes’s wax argument?  

c. How does this argument support Descartes’s conclusions about the nature of the mind in relation to the body?
Question 2 (4 marks)
What is the relationship between Santideva’s views on personal identity and his views on moral responsibility?
Question 3 (5 marks)

Singer claims that ‘if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it’.

a. Outline one consequence that Singer infers from this claim.  

b. Evaluate this claim.
Question 4 (5 marks)
Aristotle believes we should use our reason to live lives of moderation and balance, avoiding extremes of either excess or deficit.

a. How would Nietzsche respond to this view? 2 marks

b. With whom do you agree – Aristotle or Nietzsche – and why? 3 marks
Question 1 (10 marks)

‘Recent developments in neuroscience have made it clear that the mind or psyche cannot survive the death of the body.’

Critically compare the arguments that Socrates and Armstrong might give in response to this statement.
Question 2 (10 marks)
Outline one of Locke’s thought experiments and explain how it supports his argument about personal identity. Critically compare this with a relevant argument that Hume or Nagasena might present in response.
SECTION C

Instructions for Section C
Write an essay on one of the following topics.

Question 1 (20 marks)
‘Recent technological developments give us greater opportunities for happiness than at any other time in human history.’

Critically discuss this statement. In your response, draw on relevant philosophical sources, including at least one of the following: Aristotle, Nietzsche, Plato’s Gorgias or Singer.

OR

Question 2 (20 marks)

Would Callicles’s views on social responsibility be likely to promote the good life in contemporary Australia? In your response, as well as drawing on Plato’s Gorgias, you may refer to other relevant philosophical sources.

OR

Question 3 (20 marks)
The following was submitted to the ‘Comments’ section of a national daily newspaper:

‘All too often, we look to science and technology to help us evade our ethical responsibilities. We expect medicine and pharmacology to save us from the consequences of our poor lifestyle choices. We expect scientific or technological solutions to problems that we have created, such as pollution and global warming. And when we can’t face reality, we go shopping.’

AAJ Joyce, Fairfield

Critically respond to at least one issue identified in this comment. In your response, draw on relevant philosophical sources, including at least one of the following: Aristotle, Nietzsche, Plato’s Gorgias or Singer.
Extra space for responses

Clearly number all responses in this space.
An answer book is available from the supervisor if you need extra paper to complete your answer. Please ensure you write your student number in the space provided on the front cover of the answer book. At the end of the examination, place the answer book inside the front cover of this question and answer book.