



National  
Qualifications  
2025

---

## 2025 Philosophy

### National 5

## Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

© Scottish Qualifications Authority 2025

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by SQA appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

The information in this document may be reproduced in support of SQA qualifications only on a non-commercial basis. If it is reproduced, SQA must be clearly acknowledged as the source. If it is to be reproduced for any other purpose, written permission must be obtained from [permissions@sqa.org.uk](mailto:permissions@sqa.org.uk).



## General Marking Principles for National 5 Philosophy

*Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.*

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) The term 'or any other acceptable answer' allows for the possible variation in candidate responses. Credit should be given according to the accuracy and relevance of the candidate's answers. The skill of using appropriate philosophical terminology is reflected in exemplar responses, however at this level, candidates may be awarded marks where the answer is accurate but expressed in their own words.
- (d) Refer to the glossary of terms provided in the course support notes. Different text books may use terms in different ways, and should candidates use a definition or explanation, or use language that is different from that given in the glossary, their response will be positively marked provided that the information given is correct.
- (e) Questions that ask the candidate to 'name', 'give', 'state' or ask 'what is' or 'what are' are straightforward questions requiring candidates to recall key points of knowledge or to give examples. Marks available for these questions reflect the number of points the candidate needs to make. For example, if **(1 mark)** is available, the candidate needs to give **one** correct point. If **3 marks** are available, the candidate needs to make **three** correct key points in their response.
- (f) Questions that ask the candidate to 'describe' require the candidate to make a point and then develop this point by giving further information about it. For example, if **2 marks** are available, the candidate should get **a mark** for making the main point and **a further mark** for developing the point by giving additional or related information.
- (g) Questions that ask the candidate to 'explain' or 'use' require the candidate to give reasons or show connections. This may include giving reasons why an argument is valid. For example, if **3 marks** are available for an 'explain' question, the candidate should get **(1 mark)** for making a key point of explanation and **a further mark** for each additional correct key point of explanation.
- (h) Questions that ask the candidate to 'evaluate' or 'apply' require the candidate to use their knowledge and understanding of a theory or argument to examine its validity or its usefulness in a given situation. For example, if a scenario is provided, candidates need to apply their knowledge and understanding of a theory or argument to a given situation. Evaluation can occur when asked to give information about strengths and weaknesses of a theory.

Marking instructions for each question

Section 1 – Arguments in action

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
1.	(a)	<p><i>The table below gives definitions of key terms in philosophy. Complete the table by writing the term that each of the definitions refers to.</i></p> <p><b>1 mark</b> for each correct answer.</p>	<p>1 1 1 1 1</p>	<p>i. Statement ii. Fallacy iii. Valid iv. Argument v. Premise.</p>
	(b)	<p><i>Identify the <b>two</b> valid arguments in the following list by ticking the appropriate boxes.</i></p> <p><b>1 mark</b> for each correctly identified argument.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>If you look at a screen for too long your eyes will go square. You have looked at a screen for too long. So you have got square eyes.</p> <p>If you look at a screen for too long your eyes will go square. You don't have square eyes. So you have not looked at a screen for too long.</p>
	(c)	<p>(i) <i>Explain why this is not an argument in the philosophical sense.</i></p> <p><b>No marks can be awarded for defining an argument.</b></p>	<p>3</p>	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for each of the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no attempt is made to persuade or support a claim/there are no premises or conclusion</li> <li>• it does not contain any statements (<b>1mark</b>)</li> <li>• it is made up entirely of commands, questions and exclamations. (at least two of these should be named for <b>1 mark</b>)</li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(ii)	<i>Explain the false dilemma argument in Zara's argument.</i>	3	<p><b>Zara:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>two options are presented in an argument as being the <b>only</b> two options available (1 mark)</li> <li>a conclusion is established on the grounds that the rejection of one option entails the acceptance of the other option (1 mark)</li> <li>this is a fallacy because there are more than two options available. (1 mark)</li> </ul> <p>Candidates can get a <b>maximum of 2 marks</b> if there is no reference to Zara's argument.</p>
	(iii)	<i>Explain the slippery slope fallacy in Nel's argument.</i>	4	<p><b>Nel:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a conclusion that a first step should not be taken, (1 mark) is established on the grounds that the first step will inevitably lead to further undesirable events and/or actions and/or commitments (1 mark)</li> <li>this is a fallacy because there is no justification for the claim that the initial first step will lead to this undesirable event/action/commitment (1 mark)</li> <li>most people who go fishing don't go on to kill endangered animals for fun/it is unlikely that going fishing would lead to killing endangered animals. (1 mark)</li> </ul>
	(iv)	<i>Put the argument below into standard form.</i>	3	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for doing each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>correctly identifying the conclusion as '(If you want a new hobby then) you should try metal detecting.' (No marks should be awarded if they include 'Give it a go.')</li> <li>all premises should be full sentences.</li> <li>changing all mentions of 'It' to 'Metal Detecting.'</li> </ul>

Section 2 – Knowledge and doubt

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
2.	(a)	<i>Describe the metaphor Locke uses to explain his view on innate ideas.</i>	3	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he uses his metaphor of a blank sheet of paper to represent the human mind before it acquires knowledge</li> <li>• he claims that the act of writing on the slate represents how we gain knowledge gradually through our experiences/a-posteriori</li> <li>• Locke rejects the existence of innate ideas.</li> </ul>
	(b)	<i>Describe the metaphor Leibniz uses to explain his view on innate ideas.</i>	3	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he uses his metaphor of veined marble to represent the human mind prior to experience</li> <li>• the veins in the marble guide the sculptor towards the sculpture in the same way that innate ideas guide the thinker towards knowledge</li> <li>• Leibniz claims that we have some innate ideas.</li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(c) (i)	<i>Describe Descartes' senses argument.</i>	2	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descartes' claim that his senses have been shown to deceive him</li> <li>• Descartes' conclusion that it might be wise not to trust in them completely</li> <li>• examples of the kinds of things our senses deceive us about – things that are very small or very far away.</li> </ul>
	(ii)	<i>The senses argument <b>does not</b> fully undermine Descartes' confidence in knowledge gained through experience. Explain why.</i>	2	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• although his senses might deceive him some of the time, it seems unreasonable to reject them completely</li> <li>• Descartes' point that the senses seem to be reliable for things that are very obvious</li> <li>• Descartes' examples such as the fact that he is sitting by the fire or holding a piece of paper in his hands</li> <li>• Descartes says that if he were to disregard knowledge of the senses altogether, he would be like a madman.</li> </ul>
	(iii)	<i>Explain how Descartes uses the dreaming argument to further undermine our confidence in knowledge gained through experience.</i>  Candidates must make the third point in order to gain full marks.	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• he claims that there are no definitive signs by which he can distinguish wakefulness from sleep/ what is real from what is not (<b>1 mark</b>)</li> <li>• Descartes cannot be sure that he is not dreaming right now (<b>1 mark</b>)</li> <li>• the dreaming argument fully undermines Descartes' faith in knowledge gained through experience because he can't trust his senses. (<b>1 mark</b>)</li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(iv)	<p><i>Explain at least one criticism of Descartes' approach in the Method of Doubt. Criticisms may be strengths and/or weaknesses. You must refer to the Method of Doubt, and not to specific arguments.</i></p> <p>Marks can be awarded <b>one mark</b> for stating a criticism, and <b>a further mark</b> for developing that criticism.</p> <p>Candidates can approach this question in different ways – they may make multiple points, or give a single detailed answer.</p>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descartes' approach is rigorous. <b>(1 mark)</b> If there is the slightest hint of doubt, he will reject all knowledge within that particular category <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Descartes' method is very successful at dismantling knowledge <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• the criterion of indubitability is too high a standard to maintain. <b>(1 mark)</b> Useful knowledge may not need to be certain <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Descartes saves himself time by going straight to the foundation of his beliefs. <b>(1 mark)</b> In doing so, he assumes the truth of the foundationalist approach <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Descartes didn't need to bother with the senses and dreaming arguments as they are both eclipsed by the deceiving God argument <b>(1 mark)</b>. But Descartes' approach was to take people with him through the stages of doubt <b>(1 mark)</b>, and they may not have been so willing to accept his conclusion if he had begun with the deceiving God argument. <b>(1 mark)</b>. His expansion of the sphere of doubt as he progresses was a good strategy. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>
	(d)	<p><i>According to Hume, what is an impression?</i></p>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impressions are our more lively perceptions <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• candidates should be credited for using examples that show an accurate understanding (eg) heat – impressions are the perceptions we have when we actually feel the heat. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>
	(e)	<p><i>According to Hume, what is an idea?</i></p>	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ideas are fainter perceptions <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• memory or imagination of the impression <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• a copy of an impression <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• candidates should be credited for using examples that show an accurate understanding (eg) ideas are those we have when we anticipate or remember feeling heat. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(f)	<p><i>Explain how Hume uses the idea of God to argue that all ideas can be traced back to earlier impressions.</i></p> <p>Candidates may be awarded a <b>maximum of 2 marks</b> if they focus only on the idea of God being complex, and do not link it to Hume's argument that all ideas can be traced back to earlier impressions.</p>	3	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hume thinks that the idea of God is as far removed from our experience as it is possible to be. <b>(1 mark)</b> Some people believe the idea of God is innate <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Hume demonstrates that the idea of God is a complex idea. <b>(1 mark)</b> Hume shows that it could be created by augmenting the simple ideas of wisdom and goodness <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Hume challenges us to come up with an idea that can't be traced back to experience. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>
	(g)	<p><i>State <b>two</b> of the examples Hume uses to show that if someone doesn't have the impression then they can't have the corresponding idea.</i></p> <p>Candidates may be awarded marks for either specific examples, or for identifying two categories.</p>	2	<p>Candidates should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for any suitable answers, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• malfunctioning senses</li> <li>• absence of relevant experience</li> <li>• absence due to species limitations</li> <li>• example of blind man and colour.</li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(h)	<p><i>Describe at least two criticisms of Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas. Criticisms may be strengths and/or weaknesses.</i></p> <p>Candidates should be awarded a <b>maximum of 4 marks</b> for one criticism.</p>	6	<p><b>Possible strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it does seem impossible to think of an idea that is not based on an earlier impression <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Hume's description of the processes of the imagination that creates complex ideas does seem accurate. <b>(1 mark)</b> It's hard to imagine anything, even the most weird and wonderful creatures, that can't be explained in this way <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• it seems very plausible that a person who has been blind or deaf from birth would not have an idea of colour or music. <b>(1 mark)</b> All attempts to explain any understanding tend to be based around other experiences eg cold = blue or music = experience of a vibration <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Hume's <b>atomistic</b> theory fits in with our scientific understanding of the world <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Hume defends his distinction between impressions and ideas against criticism by pointing out that it applies only to the healthy mind <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• If we accept Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas, it gives us a strong reason to reject the existence of innate ideas. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is it always the case that impressions are lively and vivid, and ideas less so? Nightmares might be a counter-example to this <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• it's not clear what Hume means by force and vivacity <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• does he undermine his own theory with his missing shade of blue counterargument? <b>(1 mark)</b> Is his dismissal of it as a singular example satisfactory? <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• can all ideas be reduced to simple impressions? For example, can concepts like justice, beauty etc be sourced in an impression? <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• the veil of perception criticism of empiricism applies to Hume. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul> <p>No marks should be awarded for descriptions of the missing shade of blue or Hume's response that the example is 'singular'</p>

### Section 3 – Moral philosophy

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
3.	(a)	<i>Which of the following is the best description of the Greatest Happiness Principle?</i>	1	1 mark for brings about the greatest good for the greatest number.
	(b)	<i>What is the best description of the Hedonic Calculus?</i>	1	1 mark for it is a way of working out how much happiness an action produces.
	(c)	<i>What would Mill say is the best description of a competent judge?</i>	1	1 mark for someone who has experienced both higher and lower pleasures.
	(d)	<i>What is the best description of the equity principle?</i>	1	1 mark for everyone's happiness is of equal importance.

Question	General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
(e)	<p><i>How effective is Utilitarianism as a moral theory?</i></p> <p>Candidates should be awarded one mark for each key feature of Utilitarianism that they explain, up to a <b>maximum of 6 marks</b>.</p> <p>They should be awarded <b>1 mark</b> for each strength/weakness of Utilitarianism that they mention, and further credit for appropriate explanation.</p>	<b>10</b>	<p>The consequentialist principle states that the moral worth of an action is determined <b>solely</b> by the consequences <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>The hedonic principle states that pleasure is the only intrinsic good <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Motives are irrelevant for Utilitarians. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>The right action can be determined by using the hedonic calculus. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Bentham believed that all pleasures are equal. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Mill made a distinction between higher and lower pleasures <b>(1 mark)</b>, believing that higher pleasures are more valuable. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Utilitarianism might allow for the tyranny of the majority, where the few suffer for the benefit of the many. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Utilitarians are committed to the hedonic principle, but not all pleasures are good. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Consequences are not all that matters when making moral decisions – people’s motives are important too. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>We often don’t find out what the consequences of an act are until long after the act has taken place, <b>(1 mark)</b> but we don’t have the benefit of hindsight when we are making moral decisions. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>The actual vs intended vs reasonably foreseeable consequences issue is a problem <b>(1 mark)</b> because it is not obvious which should carry the most weight. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Local vs global consequences, an action that could have good consequences locally may be disastrous globally and vice versa. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>Long-term vs short-term consequences, an action that could have good consequences long-term may be disastrous short-term and vice versa. <b>(1 mark)</b></p> <p>If consequences are your total focus then you have a very demanding moral theory <b>(1 mark)</b> with unlimited personal responsibility. <b>(1 mark)</b></p>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(f)	<p><i>You have studied another moral theory as well as Utilitarianism. Describe the key features of your other moral theory.</i></p> <p>Candidates should not be awarded marks for simply naming a feature.</p>	6	<p>For candidates who have studied Kantianism. An <b>accurate description</b> of any main features, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deontological theory <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• it is based on intentions rather than consequences <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• reason is sovereign <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• Maxims are universalised using the Categorical Imperative <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• no one should be used ‘merely as a means to an end but always at the same time as an end in themselves’ <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• perfect duties and imperfect duties. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul> <p>For candidates who have studied Virtue Ethics. Any main features, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is concerned with how to live a good life <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• emphasis is on character rather than action <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• in order to live a good life, we ought to strive for a virtuous character <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• an action is good if it is what a virtuous person would do <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• virtues are what we need to live a good life <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• examples of virtues. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(g)	<p><i>What advice would a follower of your other moral theory give you in this situation? Explain your answer.</i></p> <p>The chosen moral theory must be applied: no marks can be awarded if the candidate simply recounts their personal views.</p>	4	<p>Candidates should be credited for a correct application of their chosen moral theory, for example:</p> <p><b>Kantianism:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant would not think it is acceptable to break a promise because keeping promises is your perfect duty <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• how much you like the band is irrelevant as there are no exceptions to a perfect duty <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• so Kant would say you should go to your friend's party <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• candidates should be credited for describing the decision-making process including the categorical imperative.</li> </ul> <p><b>Virtue Ethics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a virtuous person would not break a promise <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• lying to your friend to get out of going to the party would not be virtuous <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• explaining to your friend how much you want to see the band would be honest, and may be seen as virtuous in this situation <b>(1 mark)</b></li> <li>• a virtue ethicist would say you should go to your friend's party. <b>(1 mark)</b></li> </ul>

Question		General marking instructions for this type of question	Max mark	Detailed marking instructions for this question
	(h)	<p><i>Explain two criticisms of your other moral theory. You may use examples to support your answer, and/or consider responses to these criticisms.</i></p> <p><b>1 mark</b> for identifying a criticism and up to <b>2 marks</b> for explaining the criticism.</p> <p>Award a maximum of <b>4 marks</b> for only giving <b>one</b> criticism.</p> <p>Candidates may be awarded marks for giving responses to criticisms.</p>	<b>6</b>	<p>Candidates who have studied Kantianism may identify the following criticisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kantianism completely ignores consequences. Yet human beings intuitively look at consequences when making moral decisions (<b>2 marks</b>)</li> <li>• Kantianism ignores motives other than duty. Yet sometimes it would seem more morally praiseworthy to do something out of love, for example, rather than because it is your duty (<b>2 marks</b>)</li> <li>• duties often seem to conflict with each other. Yet Kant’s theory doesn’t seem to give any clear way of deciding which duty you ought to follow when you can’t do both. (<b>2 marks</b>)</li> </ul> <p>Candidates who have studied Virtue Ethics may identify the following criticisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtue Ethics might not help us figure out what we ought to do in a moral dilemma, however its focus is on how we can live a good life (<b>1 mark</b>)</li> <li>• Virtues can sometimes come into conflict with each other (<b>1 mark</b>) – for example, it is virtuous to be kind and to be honest, but it is sometimes not possible to be both (<b>1 mark</b>) if your friend gets a bad haircut (<b>1 mark</b>)</li> <li>• it seems that Virtue Ethics can be reduced to deontological moral theory – honesty being a virtue is very much like a moral law that says ‘do not tell lies’. (<b>2 marks</b>)</li> </ul>

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]