# Government of South Australia LogoSACE Board Logo2024 Philosophy Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

This subject assessment advice, based on the 2024 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. It provides information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

The Subject Renewal program has introduced changes for many subjects in 2025; these changes are detailed in the change log at the front of each subject outline. When reviewing the 2024 subject assessment advice, it is important to consider any updates to this subject to ensure the feedback in this document remains accurate.

# School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the online process by:

* thoroughly checking that all grades entered in school online are correct
* ensuring the uploaded tasks are legible, all facing up (and all the same way), and remove blank pages, student notes or track changes
* ensuring the uploaded responses have pages the same size and in colour so teacher marking, and comments are clear.

Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis

Students complete two Argument Analysis tasks. Each task is to consider a different type of text. Students apply their knowledge of reasoning and argument in identifying and analysing the arguments. They show how evidence for the premises of the arguments identified are developed within the chosen text. The logical strength of the argument is analysed.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* choosing a text for analysis that has some clear arguments for analysis. For example, persuasive texts tend to have easily identifiable arguments e.g. documentaries, opinion pieces, promotional material, TED talks.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated logical strength of the arguments identified, clearly shown by expressing the argument in ‘Standard Form’ (numbered premises followed by a conclusion) (RA2)
* clearly explained argument terminology
* used accurate terminology. For example, the terms *valid* and *sound* were used accurately in relation to deductive arguments and inductive arguments were analysed using the correct terminology for inductive arguments e.g. *cogent* and *strong/weak* (C2)
* showed strong understanding of the strength or otherwise of the argument forms identified (deductive/inductive) in their analysis of the logical form
* explored the veracity of a premise and the subsequent impact on the strength or weakness of the argument (CA1) in their discussion of premises
* showcased the student’s original critical thinking, rather than tertiary analysis of others’ views of the chosen text in the Critical Analysis
* avoided discussing the context of the text too much, and only provided the required background
* followed one referencing convention consistently
* provided a comprehensive and accurate bibliography.

The less successful responses commonly:

* neglected to specifically define or address an argument within the text and did not identify and present an argument in ‘standard form’
* provided a very lengthy recount or summary of the text being analysed rather than identifying key arguments for analysis
* used argument terminology inaccurately. The terms valid and sound were frequently inaccurately used
* relied on critics' analysis of famous philosophical arguments from secondary sources
* analysed narrative elements without relating them to the argument. For example symbolism, sound, images, irony, or analogy.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

Students undertake three issues analysis assessments, one for each of the key areas of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics.

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* using class time to analyse, discuss, and apply philosophical approaches that are within the scope of the subject outline
* supporting students to move beyond explanation or summaries that merely provide information
* requiring clear referencing of ideas from multiple sources.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated knowledge and understanding of various philosophical positions and why those positions were held
* clearly defined the philosophical issue or question and strictly adhered to this in the subsequent discussion
* critically analysed the strengths and weaknesses of various philosophical positions
* demonstrated originality of thought
* explained esoteric terminology or concepts in the student’s own words
* briefly contextualised the philosophers they referenced, without incorporating lengthy, extraneous biographical material
* were sufficiently conversant with philosophers’ positions to discuss them primarily in their own words
* incorporated and acknowledged quotations judiciously to support student’s argument
* included specific discussion of philosophers’ reasoning
* assumed and defended a philosophical position, which followed logically from their interrogation of the issue
* used examples to illustrate complex concepts
* acknowledged quotations and paraphrasing, using accurate, consistent citation
* included a comprehensive bibliography.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not specifically define an issue or question
* broadly discussed textual material
* did not format task in a structured way, making argument difficult to follow
* focused on addressing specific features in Knowledge and Understanding assessment design criteria at the expense of other specific features
* mostly consisted of cut and pasted materials from other sources
* focussed too much on biographical details
* included only one philosopher’s perspective
* were poorly edited, misspelling names and terminology
* did not appropriately acknowledge sources by including citations or a bibliography.

# External Assessment

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* ensuring that the topic chosen is within the scope of the philosophy course
* helping students to create a question for the Issues Study – this will support the student with generating their own response. (RA3)

Assessment Type 3: Issues Study

Students undertake one issues study. They examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas, choosing the issue in negotiation with their teacher.

*The more successful responses commonly:*

* made sure that the topic question allowed the student to formulate their own view e.g. “Compare A and B” does not work as well as “to what extent is A better than B” or “To what extent is … justified?”
* ensured that the topic question gave scope for the student to explain and analyse a number of philosophical positions and the arguments for and against those positions
* made sure that the topic question provided opportunities for critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments
* ensured that their topic came from one of the three topic areas of ethics, epistemology, or metaphysics
* demonstrated depth and breadth of analysis by referring to the arguments of specific philosophers rather than just broad positions. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre’s arguments rather than simply existentialism
* clearly presented and defended the student’s own position on the question
* discussed both strengths and weaknesses of arguments and philosophical positions to demonstrate successful critical analysis
* referenced appropriately and presented a bibliography accurately and correctly.

*The less successful responses commonly:*

* had a general topic rather than a specific question
* summarised broad philosophical concepts (e.g. Buddhism, stoicism, libertarianism) rather than showing knowledge and understanding of specific philosophers
* were an investigation into a particular philosopher rather than a probing study of a philosophical issue
* were an attempt to define a branch of philosophy rather than a study of a philosophical issue
* had limited original critical analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical perspectives
* did not present and defend the student’s own position on a question
* presented a very brief personal viewpoint or presented a viewpoint that was not well supported by good reasons that related to the philosophical positions discussed within the essay
* had a chatty or informal writing style which limited opportunities to express sophisticated reasoning, argument, and critical analysis.