

## May 2015 subject reports

# Philosophy

## Overall grade boundaries

### Higher level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 42	43 - 54	55 - 67	68 - 79	80 - 100

### Standard level

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 12	13 - 27	28 - 41	42 - 53	54 - 65	66 - 77	78 - 100

## Higher and standard level internal assessment

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 24	25 - 30

## The range and suitability of the work submitted

### Stimuli and themes

Stimuli and themes were very varied this year. It is clear that a great majority of students are making their own choices with regards to stimulus materials, which leads to more originality and individuality. Stimuli were often contemporary, such as hip hop songs and scenes from recent films and series. Students successfully used lyrics, poems, film extracts, articles, blog extracts,

adverts, photographs, cartoons, pictures of everyday objects, paintings etc. to identify a philosophical theme relevant to both their stimulus and the syllabus.

Examples of particularly successful IAs included a philosophical exploration of time travel, based on an extract from a *Harry Potter* book, as well as an essay inspired by a scene from the film *Lucy*, discussing whether knowledge makes us human.

Quite a few students were still allowed to use entire films, books or TV series, which is inappropriate and penalised under criterion C. Some students used stimulus material that was too philosophical in nature, which is also penalised under criterion C. Extracts from Dawkins's *The God Delusion*, Richard Janaro's *The Art of Being Human*, or Eric Zemmour's *Le Suicide Français* can hardly count as "non-philosophical material". Given the wealth of possible non-philosophical stimuli that can be used, it seems a shame to remain too close to Philosophy, as it defeats the purpose which is of students learning to find philosophical themes in practically anything.

### Format and nature of the philosophical analysis

There are many ways to write a good philosophy essay, and candidates can use all kinds of formats successfully, including dialogues.

However, the following mistakes were common:

- Too much emphasis on the stimulus itself. Candidates failed to identify a central philosophical theme and instead let the stimulus drive their essay. Some candidates spent their essay making as many connections as possible between their stimulus and the Philosophy syllabus. Others simply highlighted parallels or common points between their stimulus and a philosophical theory. Finally, some candidates still tended to write a critique of their stimulus, focusing on irrelevant details such as the psychology of certain characters in a film. These approaches always resulted in a lack of depth, focus and real philosophical analysis, because they were not centred on a philosophical theme.
- Too little emphasis on the stimulus. At the other end of the spectrum, some candidates made almost no use of the stimulus in the essay. For instance, they used a photograph that was never referred to in the body of the essay and became a simple cover picture, or they quickly referred to the stimulus in the introduction, never to mention it again. Although this often resulted in better essays than the other extreme (over-focus on the stimulus), candidates failed to show that they could treat non-philosophical material in a philosophical manner, which is the main point of the IA exercise.
- Writing a social commentary, not a philosophical analysis. Quite a few candidates tended to engage in a general discussion that was not philosophical in nature. Some gave their opinion on social matters without making sure it was supported or justified, and often failed to consider alternatives. Some also referred to philosophical work without analysing it. These candidates usually failed to identify the assumptions and implications of their own and others' ideas. These essays did not often progress in a

logical, systematic manner. The organisation was not thematic, but rather resembled a stream of consciousness.

- Too many themes or scholars were considered. Some candidates attempted to cover a variety of topics instead of identifying a central philosophical theme. Some did identify one theme, but one that was too vast. Not even the most able candidate can give a satisfying account of “the characteristics that make us human”, for instance, under 2,000 words. Finally, some candidates – including very capable ones – tried to tackle too many scholars in one essay. This usually led to descriptive work, without much depth. Candidates were left with no space for their own thoughts and arguments.

Some common features of successful candidates' essays:

- The structure was clear and apparent, with a thematic organisation. The introduction let the reader know what central theme would be discussed and what major approaches to the theme would be explored.
- The link between the stimulus and the theme was evident throughout, although the theme itself remained the focus of the essay. There was a single, central theme.
- Arguments were carefully constructed, supported by evidence (relevant examples, scholars, and logical premises) and tested for flaws. Counter-arguments and alternative theories were considered seriously, before candidates could evaluate all sides and come to a justified conclusion.
- Philosophical theories were used in a critical manner rather than merely described. They were analysed, evaluated and compared with each other. There were enough theories to show more than one position on the central theme, but few enough for candidates to reach some depth of analysis.
- Evaluation and personal response were present throughout the essay, not simply in or near the conclusion. The conclusion itself was a critical synthesis, not just a reiteration of what had already been written.

## Candidate performance against each criterion

### Criterion A

Candidates were generally confident in their use of philosophical language and showed that they had been exposed to philosophical theories and vocabulary throughout the course. There seemed to be a direct correlation between candidates' competent use of philosophical vocabulary and their overall performance.

Many candidates still lost marks unnecessarily because they failed to fulfil formal requirements. Stimulus materials were often unreferenced, especially in the case of pictures.

## Criterion B

Most students possessed a good knowledge and understanding of philosophical theories, showing they had been exposed to a variety of scholars. Some candidates displayed an excellent, in-depth understanding of philosophical issues and theories. Some candidates attempted to use too many theories and scholars. Those who mentioned none were increasingly rare.

## Criterion C

Most students established good connections between non-philosophical material and philosophical themes. The best students tended to focus on a single theme throughout the essay, while referring to the stimulus several times. Successful students analysed and evaluated the philosophical material they selected, instead of describing it at length.

## Criterion D

The best candidates developed a strong personal response that was carefully justified by well-constructed arguments. Most candidates had a tendency to keep evaluation and personal response for the very end of the essay, which did not leave enough space for the compelling and convincing evaluation described in the upper band of Criterion D. Focusing on a single theme or question seems to help students develop their arguments in a coherent way.

## Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Emphasise the common features of successful candidates' essays highlighted above.
- Help students select one single philosophical theme derived from a non-philosophical stimulus.
- Help students narrow their essay down to a few important approaches to their chosen theme, so that they achieve depth.
- Focus on philosophical skills and "doing philosophy", so that students are less tempted to either describe theories without analysis, or describe their own opinion without supporting evidence.
- Highlight the difference between general social commentary and philosophical analysis.
- Stress the importance of referencing and following other formal requirements, as a skill that will be useful in students' future academic and professional life.

## Further comments

IAs submitted this year were generally of a good quality and continued to show an improved understanding of the nature of the task. Topics and stimulus materials were very varied and

there were many original pieces of work, reflecting breadth of instruction and a healthy emphasis on student choices.

Some issues identified in this year's samples:

- Despite a trend towards improvement, students continued to lose marks unnecessarily for failing to comply with formal requirements.
- Candidates still found it difficult to find a balance between over-using the stimulus material and under-using it. At one end of the spectrum, the stimulus was never even mentioned in the essay, while at the other end, the essay was entirely focused on the stimulus instead of a clear philosophical theme.
- Some candidates had a tendency to write general social commentary instead of engaging in real philosophical analysis, evaluation and personal response.
- Some candidates attempted to tackle too many theories or scholars, at the expense of depth of analysis and the development of their own philosophical arguments.

Marking criteria were generally applied consistently by teachers. Criterion A remained the most problematic one, as formal requirement infractions often went unnoticed, and candidates were often awarded a 5 even when their work lacked the incisive and precise language described in the upper band of the criterion.

Fewer teachers seemed to include comments on sample scripts to justify the marks awarded, even though this is helpful for moderators and should be encouraged.

## Higher level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 8	9 - 16	17 - 32	33 - 44	45 - 57	58 - 69	70 - 90

### General comments

It may be useful starting with a brief indication recalling the approach to marking which is centered on what the scripts show and not on what might be considered as missing or even wrong. This approach corresponds with the main idea of the course which is to promote doing philosophy. Accordingly, responses are assessed not on how much candidates know as much

as how they are able to use their knowledge in support of an argument, using the skills listed in the assessment criteria published in the subject guide.

Overall, on this component, candidates performed better this year compared to last year. The increase is encouraging and expected to an extent in the last May iteration of the current assessment model, when schools are at their most familiar with the subject. This is an encouraging and deserved improvement in light of the work encountered. There is a better adjustment to the format of the question, particularly in section A. There also is an improvement in terms of organization and structure, which is quite clearly identifiable in some answers. These answers are marked based on good organization and knowledge and satisfactory analysis, development and evaluation.

Of the 35 G2 responses that were received for HL P1, 77.14% thought that the paper was of an appropriate level. Over 48% of respondents thought that the paper was of a similar standard to the M14 paper, with 14.29% thinking it was slightly easier. This of course depends on the themes that were responded to. Some of these responses showed a concern regarding the Ethics questions. The central difficulty seems to be in approaching to the questions based on analysis and evaluation. Students should be prepared to unpack the questions, not just to show general knowledge in relation to the optional theme. Further, students were able to deal with both questions more than satisfactorily in many cases

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

A significant number of answers do not consider the actual requests of the question, some simply disregard the question and apply what they have learnt, thus remolding the aims of the question to suit their memorized response.

In general many responses do not pay any attention to the central instruction given by the command terms “discuss” or “evaluate.” Candidates should be reminded of the requirements of each command term as outlined in the Philosophy subject guide.

There was also a tendency to transform the question from the discussion of an issue as stated and required by the question, into purely a request for a presentation of knowledge.

Spanish examiners reiterated for another session that there is difficulty with evaluation skills and idea development of some Spanish students, which becomes explicit in response to essay questions as posed in Philosophy papers. Further, a significant group of Spanish exams presented a very colloquial style not really academically appropriate.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

On the whole there seems to be a consolidation of some good characteristics already shown in previous sessions, for example.: many candidates demonstrated the ability to structure a satisfactory and appropriate response in general terms to a challenging question; an increasing

number of candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the function of the introductory paragraph; a significant number of candidates displayed between satisfactory and good knowledge and arguments relevant to the core/optional theme to which the question referred.

Something new to remark: there was a group of answers which took very seriously the task of discussing and evaluating the central claims of the questions. These answers showed that what is expected in terms of critical analysis, discussion, evaluation and personal response is clearly achievable. Further, the diversity of contents and of levels of achievement shows the grading of individual capacities but at the same time the basic identity of this approach to how dealing with the questions. This group of answers is identifiable by a kind of “new” type of responses: answers which are comparatively stronger in D than in B (or at least even, which is not usually the case).

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Section A

Core Theme: What is a human being?

#### Question 1

The good responses explained and evaluated the issues of work and its value, and the interchange between work and leisure. Many answers related the passage to the issue of freedom and determinism. The weaker answers did not follow the rubric interpreting the task as a text commentary.

#### Question 2

This session it was quite clear that the answers from satisfactory upwards carried out adequately the format instruction. The good responses explained and evaluated the issues of identity, and considered what makes us different. The idea of uniqueness, individuality and selfhood also arose.

### Section B

Optional Theme 1: Grounds of epistemology

#### Question 3

Few answers to this question. The good responses explored the issue of coherentism and the idea that one belief has to be part of a wider system of beliefs. The weaker answers only attempted something general regarding knowledge or belief.

#### Question 4

The difference between belief, opinion and knowledge and the contraposition between empiricism and rationalism was used as a platform for good answers. The weaker answers were descriptive and at times just basic common sense expositions.

#### Optional Theme 2: Theories and problems of ethics

##### Question 5

This question was the most popular choice amongst candidates. Based on adequate knowledge, the majority of answers demonstrated at least a satisfactory level of performance. Some very good to excellent responses demonstrated very good knowledge and analysed some of the ethical positions. Weaker answers here also tended to be descriptive.

##### Question 6

This question was a popular choice too. Many answers showed at least satisfactory knowledge, and some of them demonstrated how to use it productively to explore aspects of the claim: autonomy as in the Kantian and social contract traditions, its role framed in utilitarian theories, the exercise of judgment, choice and responsibility, and the development of individuality as essential to individual fulfillment.

#### Optional Theme 3: Philosophy of religion

##### Question 7

One of the most popular and best answered questions. Many good answers discussed at least adequately: William James's ideas, inductive arguments and empirical evidence for the existence of God, the problem of verification of personal experience, ineffability and mystical experience of the divine, numinosity, and prayer and miracles as conveying possible religious experience.

##### Question 8

The good answers discussed the basis and use of religious language, how it is derived, verified or applied. Among the issues and concepts considered the most relevant were: language games, *via negativa*, the analogies of proportion and attribution.

#### Optional Theme 4: Philosophy of art

##### Question 9

Some of the better answers to this question were focused on what constitutes an experience of a work of art underlying the role of imagination in the production of a work of art. Weaker answers mainly attempted the question in general terms.



### Question 10

Answers tended to discuss more the aesthetic or non-aesthetic features of the works of art and the art experience than the judgments of beauty. Some very good answers offered varieties of the Kantian argument that aesthetic judgments are judgments of taste that are subjective and universal.

### Optional Theme 5: Political philosophy

#### Question 11

The good and very good answers demonstrated adequate knowledge of the concepts involved, critically analyzing relevant positions, for example, I. Berlin. Other answers presented more general discussions, making references to Rousseau and Hobbes in many cases.

#### Question 12

In general the answers showed good knowledge of social and political philosophy with reference to the positions of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau.

### Optional Theme 6: Non-Western traditions and perspectives

#### Question 13

Only a small number of candidates attempted this question. They generally referred to Confucian conceptions, Buddhist approaches or Taoist philosophy.

#### Question 14

As with question 13, very few candidates attempted this question. They referred to Confucian conceptions, Buddhist approaches or Taoist philosophy.

### Optional Theme 7: Contemporary social issues

#### Question 15

In both Optional Themes 7 and 8 there is a quite clear tendency to attempt to formulate a response without any specific preparation. Responses without specific preparation and study do not succeed in answering questions for Optional Themes. The answers which tackled this question mostly dealt with technology in a descriptive way, and without relation to citizenship.

#### Question 16

There were few responses to this question, often providing commonsensical considerations showing no proper preparation for this Optional Theme as with the question above.

### Optional Theme 8: People, nations and cultures

### Question 17

Almost no answers to this question.

### Question 18

Few answers here showing in general the characteristics described above for themes 7 and 8.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

In the context of the general improvement as indicated, recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates would be approximately the same as in previous sessions. The course is strongly oriented towards the development of skills synthesized under the expression “doing philosophy”. The following comments are the result of the shared examiner experience which might contribute to improve the performance of future candidates.

- Make sure candidates read the questions. Candidates can also use the internal rubrics published in the question paper to assist in guiding the way responses should be formulated.
- Candidates must pay particular attention to, and carefully follow, the initial bullet points displayed at the beginning of the exam which clarify what they are expected to do.
- Candidates must learn to be clearly focused on the question. Candidates need to be made aware that the beginning of an essay in philosophy must examine the precise nature of the question being asked, and which terms need careful definition.
- It is important for teachers to explain to candidates how to plan their essays or responses, bearing in mind that the question at the top of the response will probably need to be explained in the first or second paragraph. Attention should be given to the command term used for the question so that the answer is properly focused.

## Standard level paper one

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 8	9 - 17	18 - 23	24 - 30	31 - 38	39 - 45	46 - 60

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Candidates generally focused on a limited number of questions. Although G2 responses seemed to suggest that the wording of the Ethics questions challenged students, there was in fact, little evidence in the responses to show this. As in previous years very few students attempted questions beyond Question 10, and those that did produced very general responses that were not reflective of any philosophical thinking and analysis.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

It was interesting to note, with respect to Section A, that it seemed that many candidates had direct contact with real twins. One response stands out as having enormous specialist knowledge at their fingertips about twins and twin research. There was a batch of questions that for the first time used Heidegger as a philosopher to contrast against. This was quite strange given that he is not easy to unpack. Similarly a whole batch of scripts used another pairing of philosophers yet had the same standard critiques and also the exact same paragraph structures. Some scripts showed strength in comparing two eastern perspectives and others seemed to draw heavily on their text from Paper 2, which was good. In Section A there seemed to be evidence that learnt responses were presented with little cross reference to the stimulus, this resulted in lower marks in some parts of the assessment criteria.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1 and 2

Some very comprehensive analysis was presented drawing on a wide spectrum of supportive material. However please note the comment above about the use of specific philosophers and style.

### Question 3

Many answers did not approach this question as an issue of belief moving to knowledge, but more an issue of pure belief.

### Question 4

Generally fair to good attempts at this question.

### Question 5

A popular question with a range of responses of differing qualities but a large number tended to compare Kant's approach to that of Mill.

### Question 6

A popular question but showing frequently a shortfall in the evaluation component of the question.

### Question 7

Reasonably popular with weaker answers merely recounting classic proofs of God.

### Question 8

Very few responses were seen for this question.

### Question 9

Few responses and lacking in concrete examples to support the argument, where an argument had appeared.

### Question 10

Very few responses were seen for this question.

### Question 11

Few responses were seen to this question, and those that appeared were not very well focused.

### Question 12

Few responses were seen to this question, but of those produced, they mostly addressed the question clearly, demonstrating some knowledge of social contract theory.

### Question 13

Few and weak responses were generally seen to this question, which was disappointing given the remarks included above for Section A that showed that some students seemed to be comfortable with eastern traditions.

### Question 14

Few responses were seen to this question.

### Question 15

Few responses were seen to this question.

### Question 16

Few responses were seen to this question.

## Question 17

Few responses were seen to this question.

## Question 18

Very few responses were seen for this question, and those that were presented were generally quite weak.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

A considerable numbers of scripts lacked philosophical content and an argument that reflected critical philosophical insight. Therefore more practice needs to be given as to how to address the philosophical problems raised by the questions set. There needs to be a structure that shows the unpacking of the components of the question and an attempt at key concept analysis so as to create structure for the argument to develop. Teachers should develop strategies to increase skills in evaluating arguments and using counter positions to develop a critical discussion. As said in previous years there is evidence in some scripts that philosophy, as a distinct subject, seems not to have been studied and yet students have been entered for the examination. Such students cannot expect to do well. It would be nice to see a greater range of questions from the options being responded to and responded to well, particularly beyond Question 10. From the scripts it would seem that, although the programme is broad and international, the actual enactment suggests a narrow experience for students.

## Higher and standard level paper two

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 20	21 - 23	24 - 30

### General comments

As stated in the subject guide: The purpose of studying a prescribed philosophical text is to allow students to achieve an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a challenging work, and to extend their overall comprehension of philosophy. This view reflects very well the notion of 'doing philosophy' found at the heart of the IB Philosophy course and, at the same time, shows

that the reading and analysis of a text written by a philosopher represents an interesting and challenging manner of engaging in philosophical activity.

The examination questions formulated for each of the twelve prescribed texts assume that candidates have read and studied one of the prescribed texts in class under the supervision of the teacher. It is also assumed that candidates have been introduced to the skills required for the critical and analytical reading of a primary text in philosophy. These skills include the ability to develop a coherent, textually based argument in response to a question focused on a specific theme, issue, idea or argument drawn from of a text. Candidates also ought to be able to formulate their own position on the views and arguments of the author of a text and to engage critically and in an evaluative manner with the text. In studying the prescribed text, candidates should develop their ability to present a philosophical argument by testing their own position against the views of the author, and to use the author's ideas to expand their own thinking on the issue(s) under discussion. The use of examples and illustrations along with the identification of counter-positions should be evident in the development of the treatment of the examination question.

Based upon the evidence received, 35 teachers submitted the G2 document for HL/SL Paper 2. The information received can be summarised as follows:

- With regard to the May 2015 HL/SL Paper 2 examination paper, 34 teachers found the examination paper to be of an appropriate level of difficulty while 1 teacher found it to be too difficult.
- In comparison with the May 2014 examination paper 5 teachers found the May 2015 examination paper to be a little easier, 27 teachers found it to be of a similar standard, 1 teacher found it to be much more difficult while 2 teachers did not respond.
- In terms of the clarity of wording of the examination paper 1 teacher judged it to be poor, 1 teacher found it to be fair, 10 teachers judged it to be good, 16 teachers saw it as very good and 8 teachers judged the paper to be excellent.
- With regard to the presentation of the examination paper 1 teacher found it to be fair, 8 teachers judged it to be good, 16 teachers saw it as very good and 10 teachers found it to be excellent.
- Most teachers agreed that the examination questions were accessible to all candidates irrespective of their religion/belief system, gender or ethnicity.
- There was some concern raised concerning the accessibility of the examination questions to candidates with learning support and/or assessment access requirements.

These observations and the evidence of the performance of candidates indicate that all examination responses from the best to the weakest were situated comfortably within the scope and parameters of the various achievement levels of the assessment criteria and could be assessed without any major difficulties.

The following statistical information might prove interesting as it sets out the number of responses received for each 'QIG' ('Question Item Group' or, in other words, a group of question items within an examination paper). The 'QIG' groups can be identified as follows: QIG 01 = Bhagavad Gita; QIG 02 = Confucius; QIG 03 = Lao Tzu; QIG 04 = Plato; QIG 05 = Descartes; QIG 06 = Locke; QIG 07 = Mill; QIG 08 = Nietzsche; QIG 09 = Russell; QIG 10 = Arendt; QIG 11 = de Beauvoir; QIG 12 = Taylor.

The tables below indicate the total number of responses submitted for each 'QIG' in each of the three M15 language groups:

<b><u>ENGLISH</u></b>	<b><u>FRENCH</u></b>	<b><u>SPANISH</u></b>
QIG 01- 98 candidates	QIG 01- 7 candidates	QIG 01- 21 candidate
QIG 02- 106 candidates	QIG02- 7 candidates	QIG 02 -18 candidates
QIG 03- 233 candidates	QIG03- 7 candidates	QIG 03- 27 candidates
QIG 04- 701 candidates	QIG04- 28 candidates	QIG 04- 393 candidates
QIG 05- 433 candidates	QIG 05- 28 candidates	QIG 05- 322 candidates
QIG 06- 95 candidates	QIG 06- 56 candidates	QIG 06- 60 candidates
QIG 07- 380 candidates	QIG 07- 71 candidates	QIG 07- 98 candidates
QIG 08- 196 candidates	QIG 08- 7 candidates	QIG 08- 144 candidates
QIG 09- 74 candidates	QIG 09- 7 candidates	QIG 09- 66 candidates
QIG 10- 56 candidates	QIG 10- 7 candidates	QIG 10- 95 candidate
QIG 11- 138 candidates	QIG 11- 7 candidates	QIG 11- 18 candidates
QIG 12- 197 candidates	QIG 12-13 candidates	QIG 12- 26 candidates

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some specific difficulties experienced by candidates include the following:

- Not all candidates read and observe the bullet-pointed recommendations found at the top of the second page of the examination script. These recommendations have been formulated with the assessment criteria in mind and can, therefore, help candidates write their responses in the most effective manner possible

- Candidates need to read the examination question carefully and completely. Some candidates occasionally fail to address in a focused and precise manner some or, in a small number of cases, all of the requirements stated in the question
- Some candidates fail to understand and/or to address precisely the command term(s) of the question (e.g. evaluate, to what extent, explain and discuss)
- Not all candidates are successful in demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the text, its arguments and the philosophical views of its author
- Not all candidates are able to identify and explore those arguments, themes and ideas of the text which are precisely relevant to answering the question set for a text
- The responses provide sufficient evidence that there exists a difficulty in engaging, in a critical and evaluative manner, with the examination question, its demands and implications and with the relevant material drawn from the text and incorporated into the response
- It appears that many candidates find it difficult to formulate personal reflections on and demonstrate personal engagement with the arguments of the author of the text and/or with the arguments they develop in their own responses
- Candidates occasionally fail to incorporate into the response relevant supporting examples and illustrations and/or to identify and explore relevant counter-arguments in the development of their responses
- Many candidates display a tendency to invest a disproportionate amount of time developing lengthy, descriptive summary outlines of the details of the supporting examples or illustration (e.g. the descriptive details of Plato's analogy of the cave)
- A major difficulty is the failure to distinguish between a simple exposition, description, summary or explanation of the relevant arguments of a text from a focused analysis, critical evaluation, examination and discussion of those arguments
- There exists a tendency on the part of some candidates to offer a simple descriptive, general outline of the main points of an author's overall philosophical perspectives much of which often bears little relevance to the question set for the text.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

An analysis of the overall performance of candidates in the HL/SL Paper 2 examination in English, Spanish and French, provides satisfactory evidence that, in most cases, the prescribed text chosen for study had been read, analysed and evaluated under the direction of the classroom teacher. This judgement is based on the evidence provided by the examination scripts which generally demonstrated:



- Satisfactory focus on the arguments of the texts relevant to the sense and demands of the questions set
- Satisfactory knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the texts themselves as well as of the position of the authors of the various texts
- The use of appropriate philosophical terminology in general and, more specifically, the terminology of the texts and of their authors.

Factors which indicated that the majority of candidates had been well-prepared include:

- Precise focus on the wording, demands and implications of the question set
- Precise treatment of the command terms of the question
- Consistent focus on the demands of the question
- Evidence of a planned, coherent and focused response which exhibited a clear introduction which situated the argument in the general context of the prescribed text as a whole, briefly identified the objectives of the forthcoming response and highlighted important issues that would be addressed in the response followed by a well-developed argument leading to a convincing concluding paragraph
- Identification, understanding and use of the relevant material drawn from a text in developing a response to the question set
- Analysis and evaluation of relevant material
- Identification and use of relevant examples, illustrations and counter-arguments
- Incorporation of a relevant personal response.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

### Question 1: Bhagavad Gita

Given that the question asked about a central theme of the text, responses generally demonstrated good knowledge of the relevant arguments of the text and a reasonable understanding of the notion of detachment and its importance to true liberation. However, several candidates answering this question were unable to go beyond a descriptive, informative summary of certain key ideas and themes of the text and move towards the development of a critical treatment of that material.

### Question 2: Bhagavad Gita

Students answering this question were able to recount the central narrative and the appropriate interpretations of it in some detail. The principle weakness exhibited in several responses seemed to be that having recounted the story, many students did not seem to know what to do, philosophically, with the text. A number of responses did attempt to draw comparisons between the ideas in the Gita and other, largely western, moral philosophies on the topic of war. Here too, candidates often displayed a lack of critical engagement with the text.

### Question 3: Confucius: The Analects

Responses to this question demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the relevant ideas and themes of the text. The view that self-discipline was the pre-requisite for altruism was clearly indicated. Students answering this question were able to explain the manners in which observance of rituals, filial piety, deference to authority and age and the importance of fulfilling one's role in society played a part in developing self-discipline. The main weakness found in several responses was the failure to engage critically with the material drawn from the text.

### Question 4: Confucius: The Analects

Responses demonstrated reasonably sound knowledge of the arguments of the text which set out the role of education in the development of the gentleman. There was a very noticeable tendency in several of the responses to present a descriptive summary of the constitutive elements of the programme of education set out in the text. Hence, while the majority of the responses demonstrated knowledge of the text, there were weaknesses in demonstrating an understanding of the textual material, in developing a precise analysis of this material and in formulating a critical evaluation of the material set out in the responses.

### Question 5: Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching

This question focused on a central theme of the text. Nevertheless, the quality of many responses was not particularly high. Generally speaking descriptive knowledge of the central ideas was quite satisfactory. However, precise and in-depth understanding of those ideas was somewhat limited. For example, it was quite common for candidates to note early on that the central Taoist concept *wu wei* does not simply mean "passivity" or "inactivity" in the ordinary (western) sense. Having said so, however, the majority went on to treat the concept as though it meant precisely that. The amenability of the text to philosophical analysis and critical evaluation appears to have been an issue for a number of candidates. Finally, several responses failed to connect the notion of *wu wei* to the claim that a 'good runner/traveler' leaves no tracks.

### Question 6: Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching

This question focused upon one of the very central themes of the text. As a result, responses exhibited good knowledge and a reasonable degree of understanding of the relevant information drawn from the text. In most cases, key terms and concepts related to a description

of the qualities characteristic of a 'man of calling' were identified and explained clearly. Notwithstanding these positive aspects of the majority of responses, several failed to show the extent to which these qualities were actually desirable. Weaknesses were also noted in the areas of precise, focused analysis and critical evaluation of relevant material.

### Question 7: Plato: The Republic, Books IV-IX

This question, a very popular choice amongst candidates, focused upon what is, perhaps, the most central idea of the text (The Form of the Good). In general, responses were clearly organized and exhibited good knowledge and understanding of what Plato understood by 'The Form of the Good'. Its relationship to the simile of the sun, the divided line and the analogy of the cave was outlined in a relevant manner. The majority of responses included comments on the nature and role of dialectic in a discussion of the achievement of knowledge of the Form of the Good. A major weakness of several responses was to be found in the areas of critical analysis and evaluation of relevant material. Another weakness was the absence of personal engagement and response to Plato's arguments.

### Question 8: Plato: The Republic, Books IV-IX

This question was also a popular choice amongst candidates. The majority of the responses to this question exhibited familiarity with the relevant arguments of the text and demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of Plato's perspectives on the conception of the soul. Several responses successfully explained the relationship of the tripartite nature of the soul to the tripartite constitution of the state. Some responses went on to show how Plato's conception of the soul set the stage for more contemporary views (Descartes, Locke and Freud, for example). There was, however, a marked tendency in almost all responses to produce a strictly descriptive and informative essay without the inclusion of a developed critical treatment of the relevant material. Another weakness was the absence of any level of personal response to the relevant arguments of the text.

### Question 9: René Descartes: Meditations

The quality of the responses to this question was generally quite good. Knowledge and understanding of the relevant textual material was, on the whole, satisfactory edging towards good. The majority of candidates attempted to analyze the main ideas and arguments of the text in some detail and a good number of responses went beyond this material and attempted to unpack some of the more difficult aspects of Descartes's thinking. The principle weakness of many responses seems to be with the critical evaluation of material incorporated into the response, the level of which was not, on the whole, particularly strong. There was good evidence of secondary reading as many candidates sought to bring other, mostly relevant, philosophers to bear on Descartes's thinking. Frequently, however, these efforts were only partially successful, as the application tended to remain at the level of simple contradiction rather than effective critique.

### Question 10: René Descartes: Meditations

This question focused attention of a very central theme of the text. The majority of candidates had no difficulty engaging with and explaining the two arguments for the existence of God. In this regard, satisfactory to good knowledge and understanding of the relevant arguments of the text were demonstrated. However, not all candidates responded to the precise demand of the question to show how knowledge of God played a central role in the epistemological argument of the text. There was also some tendency, particularly among the weaker responses, for candidates to become preoccupied with issues of limited philosophical value. The two most common seem to have been Descartes's Catholicism and his identification of the pineal gland as the point of contact between mind and body. While neither of these points is strictly irrelevant, the latter in particular raising important questions regarding the nature and possibility of mind/body interaction, some candidates did seem unnecessarily concerned with peripheral details of the claim at the expense of the philosophical implications. Another weakness exhibited in several responses was the failure to develop a critical treatment of the material incorporated into the response

### Question 11: John Locke: Second Treatise on Government

While this question focused upon certain of the most central themes of the text, several candidates experienced difficulties responding to the precise demands of the question. The question asked for an explanation and discussion of the advantages for human society of moving from a state of nature into civil society. However, the majority of responses engaged in a detailed explanation of Locke's notion of 'the state of nature' and that of 'civil society' without treating of the advantages of the move from the former to the latter. Hence, many responses displayed good knowledge of the text but unsatisfactory understanding of the relation of key textual themes to the demands of the question. Some of the better responses were able to identify relevant connections with and applications to contemporary expressions of civil society. Weaknesses were apparent in the fields of critical evaluation of relevant material.

### Question 12: John Locke: Second Treatise on Government

Responses to this question were generally good and candidates exhibited satisfactory to good levels of knowledge and understanding of the relevant themes, ideas and arguments of the text. Many candidates were able to apply successfully and in a relevant manner Locke's understanding of the Harm Principle to contemporary political situations. In general, responses exhibited satisfactory attempts at critical evaluation and focused analysis.

### Question 13: John Stuart Mill: On Liberty

While this question asked for an evaluation of a central theme of the text, not all candidates were able to display precise, in-depth knowledge and/or understanding of the relevant text material. Weaker responses tended to formulate common sense reflections on the topic of individuality with little, if any connection to the views expressed in the text. The better responses engaged successfully both in terms of explanation as well as critical evaluation of relevant textual material. A very noticeable weakness was the failure to connect the notion of the cultivation of individuality with the notion of progress.

### Question 14: John Stuart Mill: On Liberty

In general, almost all candidates were able to engage successfully with this question. As the Harm Principle constitutes one of the quintessential notions of Mill's arguments candidates exhibited good to very good knowledge and understanding of this notion. Responses demonstrated satisfactory application of the Harm Principle as the limiting factor to both action and speech. Unfortunately, not all candidates explained, analysed or evaluated the relationship of the Harm Principle to the creation of a happy life. Weaker responses were characterized by a lack of focused analysis and critical evaluation of relevant material along with an absence of personal engagement with the implications of the arguments of the text.

### Question 15: Friedrich Nietzsche: The Genealogy of Morals

Responses to this question was generally quite good displaying sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant textual material. For the most part, candidates attempted to analyze the main ideas and arguments of the text in some detail and several responses went beyond this material in terms of attempts to unpack critically some of the more difficult aspects of Nietzsche's thinking on the issues of punishment and its origin. Better responses situated the notion of punishment as set out in the second essay of the text within the context of the first and third essays. Weaker responses suffered from a lack of insight into the relevant textual material and an absence of any critical treatment.

### Question 16: Friedrich Nietzsche: The Genealogy of Morals

This question focused on some of the most important, central themes of the text. As a result, the majority of responses exhibited good knowledge and understanding of the relevant perspectives on these themes as set out in the text. The relationship of master and slave morality, the role *ressentiment* played in the transvaluation process and the role played by the ascetic ideals and the ascetic priest on the basis of the power of *ressentiment* were explained in satisfactory detail. Weaknesses in several responses were to be identified in the areas of the critical evaluation of Nietzsche's views.

### Question 17: Bertrand Russell: The Problems of Philosophy

This question was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Those that did answer the question produced responses that ranged from the very poor (demonstrating little, if any, knowledge and understanding of the text) to very good (demonstrating precise insight into the relevant textual material). The question did ask not only for a discussion but also for an evaluation of the claim set out in the question. On this count, not all candidates responded to the evaluative elements expected in a well-developed response. This factor accounted for the noticeable tendency to remain at the descriptive/informative level of response which simply rehearsed the key ideas and themes set out in the text.

### Question 18: Bertrand Russell: The Problems of Philosophy

This question was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Unfortunately, the majority of responses did not deal with the question in a satisfactory manner nor did they show knowledge

and understanding of the relevant arguments of the text. In the cases of the weakest responses, there was little evidence that the text had even been read at all. The few stronger responses were able to tackle the demands of the question and incorporate key notions, themes and ideas drawn from the text.

### Question 19: Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition

Very few candidates chose to answer this question. Those that did were able to engage generally with the demands of the question and exhibited satisfactory to good levels of knowledge and understanding of the relevant arguments of the text. The striking weakness of almost all responses was the absence of critical treatment of the text material leaving the responses in the form of descriptive summary overviews of Arendt's views.

### Question 20: Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition

While this question was answered by a very small number of candidates, responses were able to engage successfully with the question. Key concepts, themes, terms and ideas drawn from the text were incorporated into most responses. There were attempts at a critical treatment of the material and, in the best cases, references made to possible applications of Arendt's ideas to contemporary political situations.

### Question 21: Simone de Beauvoir: The Ethics of Ambiguity

This question was not very popular amongst candidates. In general, responses were quite disappointing. The majority of candidates displayed a lack of a clear understanding of the demands of the question coupled with unfamiliarity with the relevant arguments of the text. In the weakest instances, it was apparent that the text had not been read at all. Only in a few instances did responses develop a coherent, textually based, analytical approach to the question.

### Question 22: Simone de Beauvoir: The Ethics of Ambiguity

Few candidates chose to answer this question. The majority of responses tended to offer general reflections on broad existential themes drawn more from that epoch in the history of philosophy than from the arguments of the text. The overall quality of most responses failed to demonstrate precise knowledge of the text. There were also a number of instances in which there was no evidence that the text had been read and/or studied.

### Question 23: Charles Taylor: The Ethics of Authenticity

The overall standard of responses to this question ranged from fair to good. The majority of candidates demonstrated sufficiently detailed knowledge of Taylor's principle ideas regarding instrumental reason and disenchantment with the world with many delving into the more subtle and sophisticated aspects of his views. Critical analysis was also quite good on the whole. The principle weakness seems to have been with the critical evaluation of relevant material. A number of candidates struggled to get beyond personal opinion and offer a substantial critique of the text.

### Question 24: Charles Taylor: The Ethics of Authenticity

While this question was a popular choice amongst candidates, a number of responses exhibited some difficulties with engaging with the precise demands of the question. The better responses successfully dealt with the demands of the question and displayed an ability to incorporate key themes, ideas and terminology relevant to developing a coherent argument. These responses explored Taylor's views on reason, relativism and neutrality and showed how these notions interact. The major weakness of responses was the failure to develop a critical, evaluative treatment of the relevant material.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers must choose for critical study only one prescribed text irrespective of whether the course is taught at HL or SL. The study of one text allows for a reasonable degree of precision, insight and critical appreciation into the prescribed text chosen at each of the subject levels.
- Teachers must ensure that the prescribed text selected for study is read in its entirety by their students. While the use of commentaries and text summaries can provide useful supporting resources for the reading of the text, they cannot replace it.
- Candidates must be reminded to read and take into account the list of bullet points found on page 2 of the HL and SL examination paper that precede the actual examination questions and follows the heading 'In your response you are expected to:' These bullet points provide clear, precise and helpful suggestions that can assist candidates in the development of successful responses. Teachers should explain and discuss the meaning of these bullet points in order to help students perform successfully in the examination.
- Teachers should supply their students with a copy of the Glossary of command terms found in the subject guide and should explain and discuss these terms in class. This document contains the terms that occur in the examination questions (for example, analyse, evaluate, discuss, explain, etc.).
- Students must learn to read carefully, address clearly, and answer completely the examination question. The omission of parts of the question and/or the failure to perform the required task(s) set out in the question can have serious consequences.
- Candidates must pay particular attention to the wording of those examination questions that ask candidates to make connections or establish relationships between or amongst ideas, themes, or issues raised in a prescribed text.
- Teachers should help their students understand the difference between the simple exposition and/or description of an author's argument and a critical analysis and evaluative treatment of the elements of that argument. The definitions of, for example,

the skills of analysis and evaluation can be found at the end of the current subject guide.

- Teachers should encourage students to develop concise introductory and concluding paragraphs that help set the stage for the development of the response and assist in bringing the essay to a successful and convincing conclusion.
- Teachers should help students understand the importance of making direct and indirect references to the text in the development of their responses.
- Teachers should introduce their students to a variety of interpretations of the chosen text. This information can be used effectively in the development of counter-arguments.
- Teachers should help their students identify relevant examples and illustrations which serve to support the analysis of the arguments of a prescribed text. However, students must be cautioned in how they use these examples and illustrations in the development of their own responses. For example, an over-emphasis on the explanation of the minute details of an example or illustration could potentially detract from the development of the actual treatment of the question set for the text.
- Teachers should use more effectively the IB's online resources (OCC) for assistance and sharing of information regarding the prescribed texts studied in class. Whenever appropriate, this information should be shared with students.
- Teachers should provide their students with past Paper 2 examination questions. In this way, candidates will become familiarised with the style and format of typical Paper 2 examination questions appropriate to the prescribed text(s) studied in class. This suggestion can be addressed quite readily since the IB has published the IB Philosophy question bank which contains past questions, markschemes and subject reports. Similarly, teachers might want to collect sample scripts from their own students that can be made anonymous and used in class to demonstrate strengths and weaknesses in actual student responses.
- Teachers ought to read carefully the annual Subject Reports that are published on the OCC philosophy site. The information supplied in these reports offer useful observations and suggestions for the preparation of candidates for the various components of the Philosophy examination.
- Teachers ought to take advantage of completing and submitting the official G2 form at the end of every examination session.



## Higher level paper three

### Component grade boundaries

<b>Grade:</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Mark range:</b>	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 22	23 - 25	26 - 30

### General comments

Paper 3 provides Higher Level candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate several important skills that distinguish a HL student from his or her SL counterpart. The stated purpose of this examination (using, as it does, an unseen text extract to provide the context of candidate responses) is “to allow candidates to demonstrate an understanding of philosophy as an activity by means of a holistic application of the philosophical skills...they have developed throughout the course.” In the context of the Paper 3 examination, HL students are challenged to read the text extract and, on the basis of the text extract, engage the following skills:

- Critically read, understand and analyse an unseen text written by a philosopher about philosophical activity.
- Develop a concise description of philosophical activity as presented in the text.
- Explore pertinent issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text relating this to the experience of doing philosophy throughout the whole of the course.
- Make appropriate references to the text that illustrate a candidate’s understanding of philosophical activity.
- Develop a personal evaluation and response to the issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text.

Paper 3 continues to be a relevant and challenging component of the HL Philosophy programme. While this is the final May examination session of the old Philosophy Subject Guide it is still useful as the Paper 3 component in the new subject guide is not too dissimilar to the old component. The information, comments and suggestions incorporated into the Subject Report should still serve as a useful resource for teachers presenting this course component to their HL students. Hopefully, this information will:

- Enable teachers to reflect upon the examination performance of their students.
- Help teachers prepare more effectively their future students for this examination paper.
- Enable teachers to make the most of the opportunities, challenges and innovations afforded by HL Paper 3.

A review of the information supplied by teachers on the G2 document provides important and relevant information about how teachers in the May 2015 examination session viewed the examination paper. It must be emphasised that the G2 document provides the formal channel for teachers to make observations regarding the content, presentation and quality of the examination paper. Teachers should not overlook this valuable opportunity for feedback in future examination sessions.

### The text extract

The text extract that appeared in May 2015 HL Paper 3 examination was an approachable discussion of the idea of philosophy and doing philosophy and enabled candidates to reflect satisfactorily on the nature of philosophy, the skills involved in philosophical activity, as well as the experience of doing philosophy from a variety of perspectives. From the teacher's perspective, 94% of respondents on the G2 forms stated that the extract was reasonable in terms of difficulty while 58% felt the extract was of a similar standard to last year. However, a relatively high number (21%) felt it was a little easier. This accessibility was reflected in the distribution of marks at the lower end of the marking. Very few students were unable to unpack at least some of the basic issues and perspectives offered in the extract. Also, unlike last year the extract was presented in the form of a dialogue. This can be a successful way of engaging with the issues of doing philosophy as different perspectives are offered as part of the extract. (The previous use of a dialogue format had caused some difficulties but these were not evident in this case.)

While there is certainly no correct or incorrect way to respond to the content of the text extract, successful responses focused on the skills noted above in the general comments section. The more successful responses were those of candidates who identified, made reference to and utilized the pertinent issues arising from the extract in the development of their responses and then drew upon all aspects of the course they studied at HL showing how the nature of philosophy as described in the text extract reflected their own experience of doing philosophy in the course.

In the extract, the two identified philosophers advanced some specific claims in relation to certain issues when considering the question of 'what is philosophy?' as well as a general sense of the nature of philosophy as an activity. Unlike a number of previous extracts drawn from introductions to textbooks, this text offered two different perspectives and this provided a suitable stimulus to candidates to reflect on their own position. On the whole, most candidates understood the claims in the text and as a result they were provoked into reflecting upon the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy, though not necessary using these categories. However, the main challenge was to delve deeper into the basic or summative insights offered in the extract and demonstrate a relatively sophisticated understanding of philosophy.

The general issues identified by the candidates were: the challenge of defining philosophy as a discipline and as an activity, the nature of truth, the relationship between science and philosophy, the role of reason in argument and/or persuasion, and the issue of progress in philosophy. Apart from the first issue these did not lend themselves too easily to referencing

experiences of doing philosophy in the course. Nonetheless, discussions in relation to science and the nature of persuasion did allow students to draw upon these experiences. Relevant experiences of doing philosophy could have included the experience of the philosophy classes themselves (e.g. the experience of debate, group discussion or research for assignments), specific experiences had during the treatment of the various course components (including the Internal Assessment and Extended Essay), a comparison between the activity of philosophy and that encountered with other subjects in the IB Diploma and finally, references to how skills learned in the philosophy course find application outside the classroom situation (e.g. reading a newspaper article, viewing a film, listening to the lyrics of a song, etc.). Some of the more sophisticated responses used these experiences to compare and contrast the experiences of a science classroom and therefore reflect on the nature of knowing and the generation and affirmation of knowledge in the two disciplines.

## The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

While the evidence provided by candidate responses demonstrates that the extract provided a reasonable number of opportunities for candidates to engage personally with the text and its arguments, the use of the different perspectives and experiences was limited. For example, many candidates told a story of the attitude to Philosophy as a subject expressed by their parents or friends and their introduction to philosophy in their first few lessons of their Diploma programme without offering a sophisticated understanding of the nature of philosophy as a discipline, its role in exploring humanity and the world we exist within, as well as the tools, methodologies, and skills it draws upon to do so. Instead, they were often simply statements of classroom experiences rather than illustrations of the nature, function, methodology and meaning of philosophy. Similarly, though most candidates demonstrated they recognized the experience of 'doing philosophy' as part of their courses, many failed to understand that they were required to relate this experience to their evaluation of the philosophical activity raised in the text. For example, many responses contained references to classroom debate in relation to abortion and the nature of truth that 'opened their eyes to different perspectives'. Very few, however, contained an explanation of how this came about leaving many examiners wondering about the meaning and/or implications of these experiences and the insights they supposed to bring to the issue of doing philosophy and the question of what philosophy is as a discipline and as an activity. Candidates who understood the importance of satisfying this requirement again stood out - it seems likely that they were made aware of the significance of this requirement when being prepared for the examination.

Another concern expressed by a number of examiners was the extremely limited concept of science and a simplistic understanding of its relationship to philosophy. The understanding of science was limited, even in some of the more successful responses overall, and few responses contained an awareness of the more recent collaborations between philosophy and science. This was surprising given that all students had completed a course in TOK that would have in some way engaged in discussion regarding the nature of scientific practice. The suggestion is that students are not being prepared with reference to contemporary debates, relying instead

on broad, historical examples of the role of philosophy in society and as a tool to understand the world, both natural and/or human.

Other major areas of concern include the following:

- Failure to take into account the bullet points printed at the top of page two of the examination paper under the heading “In your response you are expected to”: These points are intended to help candidates optimise their general performance in this examination paper
- Failure to address precisely and complete each of the tasks identified in the four bullet points that constitute the specific requirements for constructing the response to the unseen text selection. These four bullet points follow the indication printed on the examination paper which states: “In your response include”
- A prevalent tendency to develop a very detailed and fundamentally descriptive summary of all of the arguments and points raised in the text extract. The exam rubric asks only for a concise description of philosophical activity as presented in the text
- Failure to make specific references to relevant portions of the text itself (key words, short phrases, brief sentences, paraphrases, *etc.*) and to incorporate these references into a textually relevant, focused and coherently developed response
- Failure to incorporate a personal, textually informed response to the issues regarding philosophical activity as raised in the extract
- Failure to develop an effective and focused evaluation of the issues raised in the text extract
- Failure to make clear, specific and relevant references to the personal experience of philosophy and philosophical activity encountered throughout the whole HL course
- Failure to provide an indication of how a candidate personally understands the nature of philosophical activity in relation to that raised in the text extract.

## The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Some of the areas in which candidates appeared well prepared include the following:

- The presentation of clearly organized, coherent responses using appropriate philosophical language
- The ability to remain focused on the arguments of the text and to develop responses following the main arguments of the text extract from beginning to end

- The incorporation of clear, specific and concise references to the text either by citing specific words and/or short phrases or by referring to the relevant line numbers of the text
- The ability to identify concisely the main ideas, themes and topics raised in the text extract
- The ability to make references to their own experience of doing philosophy throughout the course in a convincing and effective manner
- The ability to use their analysis of the text extract as the reference for discussing their own personal view of philosophical activity in relation to that presented in the text extract
- The ability to identify and incorporate relevant counter-arguments and/or counter-positions to points made and arguments found in the text extract
- The ability to incorporate relevant information learned in the course (ideas, information, philosophical approaches, arguments of philosophers, etc.) into the response. The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual criteria

An effective and systematic method of addressing the strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of the question is to explore them in terms of the formal HL Paper 3 assessment criteria:

### Criterion A: Expression

Candidates were generally successful in this respect. Responses were organized, the language was appropriate to philosophy, responses were easy to follow and the answers tended to be, in most cases, adequately focused and sustained. The various achievement levels of this assessment criterion were able to distinguish the best from mediocre responses. Weaker candidates failed to develop coherent responses as a result of an apparent absence of planning and organization.

### Criterion B: Exploration

Criterion B used to be a problematic area for candidates, but recent sessions have indicated that this is no longer the case. While a few candidates make no reference to their own experience of doing philosophy throughout the course, on the whole there is now a well-considered approach to this aspect of the paper's expectations. Those that were able to accomplish this specific requirement did so in a clear and convincing manner. There are still candidates who are clearly not familiar with this requirement of the examination and/or were

not sufficiently prepared (or in some cases not at all prepared) to draw on their experience of the whole course or to make relevant references to their own experience of doing philosophy as a result of following the course. Nonetheless, many more candidates were able to identify pertinent issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text and incorporate relevant supporting examples and/or illustrations into their responses.

### Criterion C: Relevance of the response and understanding of philosophical activity

The best responses demonstrated a detailed, focused and in-depth understanding of philosophy as a discipline and therefore the nature of philosophical activity discussed in the text extract. The better responses developed a coherent critical analysis of the issues raised in the text regarding the nature of philosophical activity. While almost all candidates made reference to ideas presented in the text, only the better candidates used the text in the strategic development of a convincing and compelling response. The weaker responses tended to remain descriptive, only summarizing what was said in the text extract and thus lacked the levels of personal understanding required by this criterion.

### Criterion D: Evaluation and personal response

This criterion assesses a candidate's ability to engage personally with the text. However, this ability is not demonstrated by simply stating agreement or disagreement with the positions identified in the extract or by making a series of assertions on what philosophy is. Candidates are expected to provide evidence of weighing the arguments of the text against their own views of what constitutes philosophical activity. The best responses avoided making generalized and/or over-simplified statements of broad opinion, but contained considered and textually-justified comments on how the extract enabled them to reflect on philosophical activity and their experience of the HL course. The strongest responses offered a focused and convincing critical evaluation of the main arguments of the text. Unfortunately, not all candidates were able to respond optimally to the expectation of this criterion in terms of the development of an evaluation of the philosophical activity raised in the text extract. Some of the weakest responses were characterised by the incorporation of general remarks about philosophy or philosophical activity that bore little, if any relation to the perspectives of the text itself.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Develop an understanding of the different approaches to and goals for doing philosophy and their associated issues
- Identify points in the course where these aspects of doing philosophy can be introduced and then later developed further. This should involve integrating HL Paper 3 related exercises into each of the course components. This is critically important as preparation for Paper 3 should take place throughout the course and not be devoted to a single block of teaching time (e.g. in the final weeks of the course).

- Introduce candidates early in the course to the HL Paper 3 specification (rubric and format) and seek to embed the expectations (and terminology) of Paper 3 in their learning experiences.
- Identify, explain and practice the various skills that will be required in the examination situation.
- Carefully read and reflect upon the portions of the new *Subject Guide* that outline the nature of this course component.
- Carefully read the new Teacher Support Material (TSM) devoted to HL Paper 3 and incorporate relevant ideas and resources into the teaching of this component of the course.
- Consult the relevant discussion threads on the Philosophy OCC devoted to various aspects of HL Paper 3 and the resource links that contain materials relevant for HL Paper 3 preparation.
- Develop a collection of sample texts extracts of varying lengths that can be used in class to practice the skills that are required in the examination situation.
- Help candidates learn how to make references to their experience of doing philosophy and of following the philosophy course when reading texts that provide descriptions of philosophical activity.
- Encourage students to identify and appreciate how the skills associated with philosophical activity are engaged outside of the classroom situation in daily, real-life situations.
- Help candidates understand the difference between a descriptive summary of a text which describes the nature of philosophical activity and a detailed, textually-based analysis of such a text along with an evaluation of the issues raised in the text.
- Invite students to formulate in writing their personal views of what constitutes philosophical activity and have them revisit it throughout the course as their understanding of philosophical activity grows.
- Help candidates develop the ability to formulate a personal response both to the issues raised in the text extract and to their personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity.
- Provide sufficient in-class unseen text 'practice essays' in order to gain experience and confidence in writing examination responses.
- Participate in IB Philosophy workshops which, by default, offer sessions on Paper 3 presentation and preparation.

