Philosophy

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 23	24 - 39	40 - 53	54 - 67	68 - 81	82 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 26	27 - 38	39 - 51	52 - 64	65 - 77	78 - 100

Higher and standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Stimuli and themes

Stimulus materials included photos, works of art, cartoon strips, advertisements, film scenes, poems, song lyrics, prose, newspaper and magazine articles. Stimuli continue to be greatly varied and are obviously chosen by students, which allows them to engage with the material in an original and personal manner.

Teachers are reminded that entire films, series or books must not be used, and that a specific scene or extract must be selected instead. Vague or overly broad stimulus material makes it harder for students for score well under Criterion A, as it is more difficult for them to justify the connection between the stimulus and the philosophical issue.

Examples of particularly successful IAs included:

- An analysis of The Dessert by Matisse, raising an epistemological question: How far is the distinction between primary and secondary qualities meaningful?
- An analysis of a picture of Dumbo, asking whether beings with high cognitive abilities should be granted personhood.
- An analysis of an extract from Isaac Asimov's Second Foundation, questioning the existence of an immaterial mind.
- An analysis of an extract from Alice Wolf's Soapy Water, leading to the question: Is it worth pursuing authenticity?

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: Many candidates organised their essays around the stimulus instead of using the philosophical issue as a main focus. Some candidates engaged in a linear analysis of the stimulus, identifying all the philosophical themes that could be related to the stimulus. This resulted in shallow arguments and poor structure. Other candidates treated the essay as a literary or art critique of the stimulus, which is not the point of the IA.
- Not enough emphasis on the stimulus: Having said that, the stimulus should be more than just a cover page for the IA. Although candidates who do not focus enough on the stimulus tend to do better than those who over-focus on it, the best candidates tend to manage to weave the stimulus into their arguments. Candidates who ignore the stimulus beyond the introduction can often write blander, less original essays.
- Poor identification of the main philosophical issue: Many candidates could do better if they identified their main philosophical issue more clearly. Some candidates had a tendency to try to analyse more than one issue, resulting in unclear structure. Others identified a philosophical issue that was too broad or vague, making the rest of their answer unfocused or difficult to follow.
- Writing about too many scholars or theories: Some otherwise strong candidates tried to include too many perspectives on the central philosophical issue chosen and ended up with shallow analysis and evaluation.

Some common features of successful candidates' essays:

- Candidates framed their central philosophical issue in a clear and focused manner in the introduction. Many good candidates used a question in the introduction to highlight the issue. Essays were then focused on that philosophical question, which gave them coherence.

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- Structure was a key component of successful essays. An example of a classic yet effective structure is one where the candidate asks a central question in the introduction, shows various ways to answer it in the body of the essay (with the support of philosophical theories and scholars, good examples, thorough analysis and evaluation of each position), and comes to a conclusion regarding the most viable perspective at the end of the essay.
- The stimulus was used in the introduction but also in the body of the essay, as long as it did not distract from the main philosophical issue under discussion. Some candidates successfully used the stimulus as a source of examples supporting their arguments, or as a way to show how theories apply to a different context. The very best pieces were very strong both as philosophical discussions and as ways of illuminating the chosen source material.
- Analysis and evaluation were thorough and not confined to the end of the essay. Each perspective presented was analysed and evaluated carefully. The analysis included careful consideration of assumptions and implications. The evaluation of arguments in the good samples had a degree of a personal reflection.
- The best essays tended to present two or three philosophical perspectives on one main issue, allowing candidates to explain, illustrate, analyse and evaluate each one in depth, rather than spreading themselves too thin with too many theories.

Candidate performance against each criterion

A note about referencing and bibliographies:

Although poor referencing is no longer directly penalized under the new criteria, teachers and centres should advise their candidates to provide full references and a bibliography for all the material they use in their essay. Not only does this represent good academic practice that educates candidates about the expectations they will encounter in university and/or the professional world, but it also allows them to avoid academic honesty issues.

Criterion A

Candidates generally performed well under this criterion. Most evidence used for criterion A was found in the introduction. However, candidates who continued to show the connection between their stimulus and philosophical issue beyond the introduction often performed better under this criterion. Some candidates found it difficult to be explicit and fully clear when identifying their philosophical issue.

Criterion B

Candidates also performed quite well under criterion B. Those who had framed a clear philosophical issue in the introduction found it easier to have a clear structure in the rest of the essay, making Criterion A essential as a foundation for criterion B. Some candidates tended to write a juxtaposition of theories without including efficient transitions between ideas or paragraphs.

Criterion C

Some candidates performed very well under this criterion, displaying impressive knowledge and understanding of philosophical theories. Some tried to include too many scholars or theories, making it difficult to include detailed explanations. There seemed to be fewer candidates who scored very low due to complete lack of philosophical knowledge this year.

Criterion D

Despite good performance from some candidates, there were many candidates who needed to focus more on this area. Candidates had a tendency to describe theories without analysing them in any depth. Some candidates provided good examples, but did not explore the assumptions and implications of the theories they were using. Counter-arguments were often explained too quickly and not given enough detailed attention.

Criterion E

This criterion was the most difficult one for students. Some students tried to keep evaluation for the end of the essay, leaving too few words to do this effectively. Some candidates evaluated some theories but not others, leading to imbalance. Finally, some students gave their opinion on theories without much justification.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Encourage students to be as clear as possible when identifying their central philosophical issue. A single philosophical issue must be chosen, not two or three. A further suggestion is that candidates can use a question to frame their main issue, as it seems to help many candidates keep a focus throughout the essay and organise their work in a more systematic manner.
- Remind students that the stimulus should not be the central focus of the essay. It is crucially important that the essay be centred on and organised around one main philosophical issue. The essay should primarily be discussing the philosophical issue, not the stimulus. The stimulus can be used to provide examples or support arguments.
- Remind candidates of the importance of good structure. Structure can come in many shapes, but should be systematic and thematic to get the best results. Weaker candidates could be given a basic sample structure; more proficient candidates could focus on subtler matters, such as transitions between ideas.
- Encourage candidates to explore no more than two or three main theories, so as to give themselves the best chance to include detailed explanations, analysis and evaluation of each perspective. This is particularly true when the authors chosen are complex or prolific.
- Use techniques such as asking students "so what?" questions in order to encourage them to go further in their analysis and evaluation.
- Insist on proper referencing and bibliographies to develop good academic practice.

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Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 23	24 - 35	36 - 46	47 - 58	59 - 75

General comments

In this session the exams were assessed using markbands and the best-fit approach, which encourages positive marking. Candidates are expected to select from a wide range of ideas, arguments and concepts in response to the question they are answering. From this point of view this cohort presented in general, similar levels of performance to the previous session's cohort; that's to say, there was nothing which appears remarkably different when using markbands over the previous assessment model's assessment criteria.

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 extreme cases some of these responses deal solely with the optional theme in a very broad manner, focusing directly on, for example, ethics or philosophy of religion. There was a tendency this session too to take the question as a "stimulus" (something which was seen many times in this year's responses, particularly in the Spanish exams).

In general many responses simply 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 this session 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. These answers present two main issues: they are not focused on the specific question (lacking relevance) and they transform analysis into exposition of knowledge. Knowledge must always develop into analysis as per the requirements of the question and component.

Section A elicited a large number of prepared answers; taking classical issues (freedom and determinism, dualism and monism), where not only the positions were equally presented, but even the examples were the same in a significant number of cases. In the extreme cases candidates just state the chosen issue without any attempt at relating it to the stimulus.

Spanish examiners reiterated for another session that there is a quite remarkable difficulty with evaluation skills and ideas development of a significant number of Spanish students. Further, a considerable group of Spanish exams presented a very colloquial style not really academically appropriate.

A group of exams in English presented quite severe limitations with barely coherent expression. This seems to be a problem related to language skills. Schools must ensure that candidates are sufficiently able to express themselves in the language that they will be assessed in. While language is not explicitly assessed, if points made are incoherent then this would be penalized against whichever criterion the point is trying to address.

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

The markbands assess a) structure and effective organization; b) identification of a philosophical issue / question, explanation of the relation and interrelated elaboration of it; c) knowledge and use of philosophical vocabulary; d) critical analysis, discussion and assessment of alternative interpretations, justification and development of a position. In general the answers managed quite well (from satisfactory upwards) in a) and c), and to a good extent in the identification part of b).

Within this context, on the whole there seems to be a consolidation of some good characteristics already shown in previous sessions: 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 relevant to the core/optional theme to which the question referred.

Good levels of knowledge and understanding of philosophers, e.g. Plato, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill and Sartre.

A group of answers took the task of discussing and evaluating the central claims of the questions very seriously. These answers indicated specifically, on the one hand this point of this position does contribute to e.g. sustain the claim that ethics is more about self-interest, on the other hand …etc. These answers show that what is expected in terms of critical analysis, discussion, evaluation and personal response is clearly achievable by candidates. However it also confirms that it is mainly achievable when candidates are appropriately prepared appropriately.

Excellent answers took the risk of presenting more reflective, personal, and fresh answers. They presented different ideas and reflection, showing that they were able to produce individual responses, in contrast to answers which are, as said, more or less the same. There were some cases of really effective answers in the French exams, which connected very successfully the stimulus in section A with a solid knowledge in classical authors like Descartes, Pascal and Rousseau.

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

Section A

Core Theme: Being human

Question 1

Around half of candidates chose question 1 and 2 respectively. Good responses identified significant issues related to human nature and explained and evaluated theories such as: Rousseau and the noble savages; theory of evolution, natural selection, the idea of "social Darwinism"; Hobbes's view of all against all. The weaker answers did not follow the rubric and described parts of the text.

Question 2

Some of the best answers were focused on an immediate interpretation of the stimulus referring to the conquest of space, making references to the human capacities deploying knowledge and technology, some of which exploring Descartes and extending the scope of rationality, scientific thought and technology.

Section B

Optional theme 1: Aesthetics

Question 3

Excellent responses to this question sustained that art creates its own truth. They analyzed how art might be more than mere imitation and has the ability to give us access to types of truth exploring very successfully central aspects of the theories of Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Nietzsche. Weaker answers mainly attempted the question in general terms.

Question 4

At varying levels of success the answers evaluated issues of censorship in art countered with unrestricted self-expression. Some answers sustained that by definition art challenges the boundaries of conventions.

Optional theme 2: Epistemology

Question 5

There were only few answers to this question. The good responses explored the origin of knowledge and the possibilities of its objectivity. Particularly, they analyzed the role played by society and culture in rendering our knowledge objective or acceptable.

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Question 6

The good answers evaluated knowledge as a tool to increase power. Many of them made a good use of Plato's epistemology and political philosophy. Some related the question successfully to a Nietzschean framework explaining the notion of will to power in relation to knowledge.

Optional theme 3: Ethics

Question 7

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 of Aristotle, Kant and utilitarianism. The weaker answers here also tended to be descriptive.

Question 8

This question was a popular choice too. Many answers demonstrated at least satisfactory knowledge, and part of them demonstrated how to use it productively to justify personal responses to the claim. The better answers explored among others: Descartes's emphasis of the place of rationalism in moral judgments, approaches to justifications of moral judgments based on belief in a higher being, emotion, and natural law.

Optional theme 4: Philosophy and contemporary society

Question 9

Only a small number of candidates attempted this question. They generally referred to multiculturalism, changing societies and globalization.

Question 10

As with question 9, few candidates attempted this question. They referred to the central topic of liberty and rights. Specifically, they analyzed the relationship between liberty and equality.

Optional theme 5: Philosophy of religion

Question 11

Many good answers discussed at least adequately that in a multicultural society, the diversity of religious traditions and moral views makes illegitimate any claim to objective truth with regards to religious beliefs. Some of them supported the argument that with reflection upon these other religious views comes a reassessment of personal views.

Question 12

Many answers to this question deployed very good knowledge, including the different arguments for God's existence. The good to excellent answers discussed and evaluated the central idea of determining and understanding the qualities of God(s). Some of them pointed out that the anthropomorphism still explicit in the monotheistic conceptions of God leads to paradoxes when discussing his/her attributes.

Optional theme 6: Philosophy of science

Question 13

The answers discussed generally adequately: the rooting of science in empirical observation from Aristotle to the 21st century; the roles of induction and deduction in the scientific method; the problem of induction, and verification and its role in the test for meaningfulness.

Question 14

There were very few answers to this question that encouraged the development of responses that consider the concept of the mind and how it can be understood, especially in consideration of the way science can contribute to it.

Optional theme 7: Political philosophy

Question 15

This was a quite popular choice. In general the answers showed good knowledge of social and political philosophy with reference to the positions of, e.g. Locke and Kant. Many sustained quite convincingly that the values and structures of a democratic system are the only ones capable of giving any value and meaning to the idea of human rights. On the other hand, a reasonably significant group of answers stated that the idea of human rights go beyond a democratic system including socialist and communist systems.

Question 16

Many of the responses presented reasonable good discussions and evaluations of a central obligation explicit in many political philosophies: that one of the fundamental reasons for the creation and maintenance of the state, whether through a social contract, or other origins, is that the state enacts laws that at some level encourage civic and personal virtue. The good and very good answers demonstrated adequate knowledge of the concepts involved, critically analyzing relevant positions, e. g. Rousseau and Mill.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

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 and understand the questions.

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.

In general, in their responses candidates should:
- Present a response which is well structured, focused and effectively organized
- Identify the philosophical issue raised by the stimulus material in section A or the question in section B
- Present relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge
- Explain the issue in a well-developed way
- Use philosophical vocabulary throughout the response
- Critically analyze the issue
- Discuss and assess alternative interpretations or points of view
- Justify all, or nearly all, the main points
- Argue about the issue from a consistently held position.

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Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 16	17 - 23	24 - 29	30 - 36	37 - 50

General comments

There was consensus that this cohort of candidates were spread across the whole range of performance. There seemed to be an increase in weaker students who simply were not prepared for the new topics, philosophy in general and the way their answers would be assessed. There were more bizarre answers encountered this year suggesting again that candidates were not well prepared. In some cases presentation created problems: it is essential that candidates write legibly.

Time management did not seem to be a problem this year as few candidates created the impression that they had run out of time. Many had run out of ideas.

The principal factor this year was that some students addressed questions in Section A as if they had learnt an answer irrespective of the stimulus and did not take heed of how the markbands could be used to guide the structure of the answer.
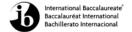
The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

It has to be stressed that too many candidates in responses to Section A simply ignored the stimulus material or only made a one sentence reference to it and then proceeded to write responses that were about a favourite idea or a learnt area. Few responses to Section A presented a strong, coherent and consistent argument with an integration of a personal response that linked the stimulus to a specific aspect of "being human".

Weaker responses across both sections did not present a clear introduction nor an outline of a direction of approach.

The new topics in Section B did not attract many candidates. Consequently few responses were seen for Optional Themes 4 and 6.

For the Optional Themes generally candidates did not always unpack the question, analyze the key concepts, or deliver a sound argument with counter positions to be rebutted.

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

Strong candidates were able, in both sections, to construct a balanced, evaluative approach using a solid base of knowledge. Their responses were well structured and a clear argument was presented and sustained.

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

Of course, as always, Optional Themes 3 and 5 were the most popular. However Question 11 seemed to have been avoided or was done badly.

Too many candidates interpreted the questions in the Optional Theme to be a stimulus similar to Section A, rather than a question to be investigated, analyzed and answered. Strong candidates rose to the challenge and tried to answer the question set, demonstrating their knowledge to support their case.

Sadly this year there were very few examples of cross cultural references to support arguments. It had been hoped that the new programme might generate a more internationally minded perspective to issues through examples and references drawn from both eastern and western thinking on given topics.

Question 1

Most responses picked up on the determinism versus freedom approach and /or human rights.

Question 2

Candidates saw either the image of a human on a planet or a robot, so some responses went in the direction of relating the image to human activity or human versus robots arguments.

In response to both questions, many candidates simply wrote about the nature of being human rather than identifying a specific aspect of humanness in the image and then relating this specific issue to "being human."
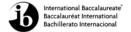
Question 3

Not a popular question but when attempted, quite well done. Some got drawn into evaluating the nature of truth only.

Question 4

Very few attempts, and those that were presented were weak in both structure and content.

Question 5

Very few responses.

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Question 6

Reponses to this question tended to be weak and did not really understand or explain what the question involved.

Question 7

Very popular indeed. Responses generally covered the classic positions of utilitarianism, ethical egoism compared to altruism. Singer appeared often. One or two concluded that self-interest was the only driving force. Very few cross-cultural references were made.

Question 8

Slightly less popular, but classic responses were presented and these included a good understanding of Kant, Plato and Nietzsche's critique of rationalism in ethics.

Question 9

Very few responses to this question.

Question 10

Few responses but those that did appear were quite strong.

Question 11

A mixed bag of responses to a not very popular question.

Question 12

Very popular. Weaker responses dwelt upon the proofs of the existence of a god rather than the characteristics of a god. There were few cross-cultural references.

Question 13

Few and very poor responses. Those that were presented were very general answers not reflecting any study of the philosophy of science.

Question 14

Few responses.

Question 15

Quite a few responses. Many used the question as an excuse to describe the virtues of a democratic system rather than answer the question.

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Question 16

Quite popular but few analyzed the nature of betterment. Classic positions of utilitarianism were well described and stronger answers brought in Nussbaum.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

It would seem that few teachers finely dissected the markbands as to guide their students to construct answers. In Section A, markband 3 asked for a candidate to refer to both the stimulus and the theme of "being human". Students need to identify clearly the issue they will investigate, which should be drawn from the stimulus. Equally the issue that is drawn has to be justified convincingly with reference to the stimulus. An issue stated as "being human" is not narrow enough to be properly investigated and therefore it is suggested that an aspect of humanness be pursued so narrowing the approach. The programme is about "doing philosophy" so a litany of learnt knowledge is not necessarily required. What is asked for is clear evidence of presenting a case and sustaining an argument to support a position and then using bodies of knowledge to support and illustrate the response being put forward. As Section A markbands progress higher, there is an expectation of alternative perspectives being presented and evaluated. This needs to be shown in the responses.

Within Section B there is a question posed which needs to answered. This question is not a stimulus like in Section A. It is a question that needs to be analyzing, and the candidate needs to define what they think are the limits and implications of the question. This would be the first step to writing a sound response. Taking the question apart and writing an introduction, and then formulating and delivering a sound argument needs to be practiced. Practice also needs to take place as to how to use knowledge to present differing perspectives of the question.

Higher and standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 25

General comments

As stated in the subject guide: This element of the course provides an opportunity for students to gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a primary philosophical text. This is a challenging but rewarding part of the course, providing an opportunity for the student as a philosopher to engage in dialogue with another philosopher. This view reflects very well the notion of 'doing philosophy' found at the heart of the DP 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 way of engaging in philosophical activity via the original writings of famous philosophers.

The May 2016 examination session represents the first Paper 2 examination questions formulated according to the new Paper 2 examination question rubric which divides each question into Part A (explain a key concept, idea or argument from the text they have studied) and Part B (engage in critical discussion of that text). Hence, Paper 2 presented several new opportunities to candidates in the development of their response. This was especially the case in providing candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of a prescribed text as well as allowing them to focus their analytical and evaluative skills on a critical treatment of that text.

Notwithstanding the new Paper 2 examination question rubric, teachers and candidates must continue keep in mind that 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 a clear demonstration of knowledge and understanding of a text along with those required for the critical and analytical assessment 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, most importantly, to engage critically and in an evaluative manner with the text. In studying the prescribed text and, especially in preparation for the Part B of the examination question, 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.

It is both interesting and useful to reflect upon the findings of the teacher comments documents received for the M16 HL/SL Philosophy Paper 2 examination. This year, 52 teachers responded. Of those who responded, 94.23% indicated that the paper was at an appropriate level of difficulty. It is important to note that 63.46% judged the M16 examination paper to be of a similar standard of difficulty compared to that of last year with 11.54% claiming that it was even a little easier. In general, those responding indicated that the clarity of wording and presentation of paper generally good to excellent.

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 Paper 2 markbands and could be marked without any major difficulties.

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

Responses to questions formulated according to the new Paper 2 examination question rubric brought to the forefront four major difficulties:
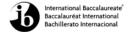- A number of candidates did not understand that they were to answer completely only

ONE question and to answer it completely as well (i.e. both Parts A and B). There was ample evidence demonstrating that several candidates attempted to answer each of the 24 questions set for the 12 prescribed texts or to answer a selection of several questions scattered amongst the 24 questions set for the 12 prescribed texts.

- Many candidates failed to answer distinctly and separately Parts A and B of the chosen question. Candidates in this situation produced a SINGLE response in which it was difficult and even occasionally impossible to distinguish how the candidate addressed the requirements of the Part A question as opposed to those of the Part B question.
- Several candidates failed to follow the instructions on the Paper 2 examination cover sheet and, while answering both Parts A and B, failed to indicate in the answer booklet where Part A ended and Part B began.
- Candidates were generally successful in demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the text with respect to what was asked in the Part A question but were unable to engage in an analytic and evaluative manner with the text with respect to what was asked in the Part B question.

Some specific difficulties experienced by candidates include the following:

- Candidates need to read the Part A and Part B examination questions 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. explain evaluate, to what extent do you agree with)
- Not all candidates are successful in demonstrating accurate, precise and/or detailed knowledge and understanding of the text and its arguments
- 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 demands and implications of the Part B examination question
- In their development of responses to both Parts A and B, many candidates had difficulty making references to and using relevant material drawn from the text
- 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 failed 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 minute 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

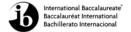Factors which indicated that candidates had been well-prepared include:

- 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

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*, Vol. 1 part 1, Vol. 2 part 1 and Vol. 2 part 4

Question 1:

Clearly, candidates who read and studied the text in class under the supervision of the teacher performed very well on this question as it focused upon some of the very central themes of the text. In these cases, both in terms of knowledge and understanding as well as analysis and evaluation, responses reflected insight into the relevant arguments of the text. Unfortunately, in many other cases, candidates demonstrated weak understanding of those sections of the text relevant to answering the question. This impacted directly on the quality of analysis and evaluation. In general, candidates were able to perform better in Part A than in Part B. The

major weakness in answering the Part B question was difficulty in engaging in an analytical and evaluative manner with the demands of the question.

Question 2:

This question appears to have presented difficulties to most candidates who chose to answer it. Responses tended to present general views about answering the question 'what is a woman?' without making direct connections with the relevant sections of the text. Only the strongest candidates were able to demonstrate sound understanding and knowledge of the text in relation to the demands of the question. Responses to Part B tended to be more descriptive than evaluative merely adding additional information to what had already been set out in Part A.

René Descartes: *Meditations*

Question 3:

This question was quite a popular choice amongst candidates. In terms of Part A, responses ranged from focused, precise and convincing treatment of the question to weaker responses that merely outlined Descartes's method of doubt without actually responding to the precise demand of the question about the justification of the method of doubting all things. Interestingly, in terms of Part B, most candidates were quite successful in setting out, in evaluative fashion, their agreement or disagreement with Descartes's method.

Question 4:

While attention to detail and in-depth development varied, responses tended to demonstrate reasonably good to excellent overviews of Descartes's account of the human mind. The strongest candidates were able to demonstrate quite sophisticated understanding and knowledge of the relevant arguments of the text. Part B appeared to be much more difficult as was demonstrated in the presentation of a descriptive summary and/or extension of what had already been outlined in Part A without the required analytical and evaluative treatment of that material.

David Hume: Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion

Question 5:

With few exceptions, candidates answering this question were able to demonstrate satisfactory to very good knowledge of the text and were able to construct responses that addressed the demands of both parts A and B of the question. This is most likely accounted for by the fact that the question addressed some of the very central themes of Hume's arguments about the existence of God. Several responses were able to explain and evaluate contacts between Hume's philosophical empiricism and the use of experience in the treatment of questions about the existence of God. The most evident weakness for some candidates was the failure to maintain focus on the development of an analytical and evaluative treatment of the relevant text

material. In these cases, part B was treated as a descriptive and explanatory extension of part A.

Question 6:

This question presented difficulties to those candidates who chose to answer it. Responses to part A tended to present satisfactory explanations of textual material relevant to answering the question but lacked detailed development. Responses to part B struggled to evaluate Hume's views about the inference from observation of the world to the view that God is morally good.

John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*

Question 7:

This question was a popular choice amongst candidates. For the most part, responses to part A demonstrated secure knowledge of the text and a sound understanding of Mill's position on negative freedom as an aid to making wise choices. Responses to part B were also generally quite well constructed and presented. The better responses made relevant links to contemporary situations in the critical treatment of the demands of the question. These responses were able to treat successfully and in an evaluative manner Mill's positive estimation of human nature.

Question 8:

Candidates were generally very successful in responding to part A of the question as the question focused upon Mill's views on individualism, a central theme of the entire text. In most cases, responses engaged clearly and effectively with Mill's arguments as set out in the text. Responses to part B of the question demonstrated some difficulties in making the necessary connections between Mill's general estimation of the value of individualism, his views on the rights of the individual and the notion of utility. These difficulties were even more apparent in the failure to engage in an evaluative treatment of these ideas.

Friedrich Nietzsche: The Genealogy of Morals

Question 9:

This question presented several difficulties to many candidates. The explanation of the 'will to power' was not always successfully and precisely situated in the arguments of the prescribed text itself. Hence, answers to part A tended to be very general without precise focus and necessary development. On the other hand, responses to part B tended to be developed in a more convincing critical manner. In this regard, direct and relevant connections with arguments of the second and third essay of the *Genealogy* were called upon in the development of the evaluation of the 'will to power' as a principle for explaining moral actions.

Question 10:

Candidates were generally successful in responding to this question. In most cases, candidates were able to engage with the arguments of the first and second essays of the *Genealogy* and

then go on to make connections with the operations of the ascetic priest as presented in the third essay. In terms of responses to part A, there was ample evidence that the text had been read, studies and understood. A similar situation was the case with regard to responses to part B of the question. Given the wording of the question, candidates felt at home in assembling critical evaluations of Nietzsche's view of guilt which incorporated relevant illustrations and personal impressions.

Martha Nussbaum: Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach

Question 11:

Candidates were generally successful in responding to this question. Given that part A asked for an explanation of two central themes of the text, responses demonstrated sound knowledge of the arguments of the text. Responses incorporated references to examples set out by Nussbaum in the text as well as illustrations drawn from the contemporary scene. There was a similar situation evidenced in responses to part B of the question. Most of the candidates answering this question were able to engage critically with the demands of the question and the relevant arguments of the text. In some cases, responses showed a tendency to wander off into a descriptive explanation of social justice rather than engaging in an evaluation of the role of human dignity in the search for social justice.

Question 12:

This question was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Those attempting to answer it were not able to address clearly and precisely each of the items asked for in part A of the question. Part B presented similar difficulties and answers tended to remain more descriptive that evaluative or, in the cases of the weaker responses, failed to address the demands of the question.

Ortega y Gasset: The Origins of Philosophy

Question 13:

This was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Responses tended to demonstrate both weaknesses in terms of a detailed, precise and in-depth knowledge of the text (part A) and in terms of the development of an analytical and evaluative treatment of the text (part B). Responses tended to range from poor to satisfactory.

Question 14:

As was the case with question 13, this was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Those who did choose to answer this question provided general and occasional vague explanations of the arguments of the text and, as a direct consequence of weak knowledge of the text, were not able to develop focused and sustained evaluations of what was asked for in part B.

Plato: *The Republic,* Books IV–IX

Question 15:

This was a very popular choice amongst candidates. The question (both parts A and B) focused on central themes of the text. Hence, candidates who chose to answer this question were able to demonstrate satisfactory to excellent knowledge of the relevant arguments of the text when responding to part A. Difficulties emerged in terms of the part B question. Many responses tended to present descriptive and fairly detailed explanations of the character of the philosopher king and of the importance of philosophy in Plato's view. However, there was a marked absence in many responses of an evaluation of the claim that philosophers become kings or kings learn philosophy.
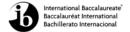
Question 16:

This was another very popular choice amongst candidates. In almost all cases, responses to part A of the question demonstrated good to excellent explanations of Plato's divided line. The stronger responses were able to engage in great detail and development with each of the elements of the divided line. However, the development of an evaluative treatment of what was asked for in part B of the question presented difficulties for many candidates. There was a marked tendency for responses to continue a descriptive explanation of some of the details of the divided line without any attention to a critical treatment of the material. In particular, there was a tendency to answer part B solely in reference to the analogy of the cave rather than in reference to the divided line.

Peter Singer: The Life You Can Save

Question 17:

This text was a somewhat popular choice amongst candidates. The stronger responses were able to present, in part A of the question, a convincing display of understanding and knowledge

of the details of the text relevant to the demands of the question. In particular, these responses were able to show a secure appreciation of Singer's notion of philanthropy. Weaker responses tended to deal in generalities and occasionally vague references to some of the key points of the text. With regard to part B of the question, a major difficulty was the tendency to descriptively affirm the view that people will be more philanthropic is they believe others are giving more rather than to evaluate the claim that this might be the case in terms of the arguments of the text itself.

Question 18:

This question was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Responses tended to be general, relying on broad references to the arguments of the text itself and remained in need of additional development both in terms of part A and part B of the question.

Charles Taylor: The Ethics of Authenticity

Question 19:

This was a very popular choice amongst candidates and, as the question focused on one of the absolutely central themes of the text; the question was answered quite successfully by almost all who made this choice. Responses to part A of the question demonstrated sound and, in the best cases detailed knowledge and understanding of Taylor's notion of 'horizons of significance'. Several candidates were able to situate this notion into the wider context of supporting themes of the text. Responses to part B of the question were equally successful as the association of the notion of 'horizons of significance' to the key notion of authenticity was usually made very clear in the responses to part A. Weaknesses occurred only when the response to part B became more descriptive that analytical.

Question 20:

This was also a very popular choice amongst candidates. Part A required precise knowledge and understanding of one of the more specific central notions of the text. Hence, not all candidates were able to demonstrate secure and detailed knowledge of the relevant arguments and illustrations of the text.   Candidates experienced some difficulties with developing a critical response to part B of the question tending to explain Taylor's response to Weber's position rather than engaging in an evaluation of it. Nevertheless, candidates were generally successful in responding to this question.

Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching

Question 21:

This question posed difficulties to many candidates who were unable to demonstrate detailed, precise and focused knowledge and understanding of the demands of the question in relation to the relevant material that could have been drawn from the text. Hence, responses to part A tended to be under-developed, lacking in detail and development. Responses to part B tended

simply to continue a description of some of the consequences of the claim set out in part A or, alternatively, failed to explore the consequences of the claim rather than only the claim itself.

Question 22:

Responses to part A of this question tended to generalize some of the central notions put forth in the text rather than to deal with the precise demands of the question. Knowledge and understanding of the text generally bordered on simplified expressions of *wu wei* applied to a basic understanding of political leadership. Unfortunately, responses to part B of the question usually offered a lengthy description of the qualities of a good leader without performing the evaluation of those qualities as asked for in the question.

Zhuangzi: *Zhuangzi*

Question 23:

This question was not a popular choice amongst candidates. Responses to part A did not demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the textual material that could have been relevant to developing a sound response to the question. The analytical and evaluative requirements of part B of the question were seldom met in a satisfactory manner with responses tending to add descriptive material about the *Tao* without exploring the relationship of speech to it.

Question 24:

Few candidates chose to answer this question. Of those that did, knowledge and understanding of the text (part A of the question) tended to range from poor to satisfactory. Responses to part B fell into the error of explaining what an understanding of the *Tao* might be rather than engaging in the evaluation called for by the question.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers must chose 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 insure 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.
- Teachers should supply their students with a copy of the Glossary of command terms found in the current 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, to what extent, etc.).*
- Teachers should supply their students with a copy of the P2 markbands (both for Part A and for Part B) and carefully explain and discuss them with their students. Moreover, all formative and summative written work done in preparation for the formal P2 examination ought to be marked using these markbands.
- Students must learn to read carefully, address clearly, and answer completely the examination question. This is especially the case with the current examination question

rubric which divides each question into 'Part A' and Part B'. 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.

- Teachers must clearly explain to their students that the examination rubric requires a response to ONE question selected from the two options for single prescribed text selected for study in the course. Students must understand that in writing their response, they must clearly indicate where Part A begins and ends and where Part B begins. This separation of the two parts is absolutely essential and must be indicated unambiguously in the answer booklet.
- 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, description or explanation of the arguments of the text relevant to the question set for Part A and a critical analysis and evaluative treatment of the arguments of the text relevant to the question set for Part B. The definitions of, for example, the skills of analysis and evaluation can be found in the glossary of terms at the end of the current subject guide.
- Teachers might want to 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 prescribed 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 the response to the question set for Part B of the question.
- 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. 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 teacher comments G2 form at the end of every examination session.

- Teachers might want to consider enrolling for an IB Philosophy workshop (online and face to face; Categories 1 (new and less experienced teachers) and Category 2 (experienced teachers).

Higher level paper three

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

General comments

This session was the first session of the new subject guide and particularly the new assessment rubric and best-fit approach to assessment. Paper 3 still provides Higher Level candidates with the opportunity to demonstrate several important skills that distinguish a HL student from his or her SL counterpart. The purpose of this examination is still the same (using, as it does, an unseen text extract to provide the context of candidate responses). The task is described as the requirement "to write a response to [a] text, comparing and contrasting their experience of philosophical activity with the view(s) of philosophical activity found in the text." It is also important to note that "[t]his allows them to deepen their understanding of philosophy as an activity by providing a space in the course for critical examination of philosophy itself, and its methods. It is also an opportunity for students to reflect on their own experience of "doing philosophy"." The emphasis is firmly on the "critical examination" of philosophy as an experience, practice and discipline.

This is a change to the previous description in the old guide (pre-2016 assessments) which stated, the purpose of Paper 3 was "to allow candidates to demonstrate an understanding of philosophy as an activity by means of a holistic application of the philosophical skills...they developed throughout the course." This change in emphasis is important to note. There is a clearly defined expectation that students approach the task with a clear understanding of the need to be critical in their engagement with the claims of the unseen text.

The best-fit approach to assessment

This was the first session in which the best-fit model of assessment was applied to Paper 3. The examiners were unanimous in stating that it allowed for more confident assessment of the responses. However, candidates must understand the requirements of the markbands and how to demonstrate to the examiner their knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the nature of philosophy. For a student to achieve a top mark band their response must reflect the expectations defined in the markbands.

Paper 3 remains a relevant and challenging component of the HL Philosophy programme. As noted in the last subject report there are still strong similarities between the Paper 3 activity in the old guide and the new guide. However, there are some contrasts that were worth highlighting and reflecting upon in case there is a need to change support resources, teaching practice, and feedback.

Given this is the first subject report of the new *Philosophy Guide*, it is hoped that the information, comments and suggestions incorporated will 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 on the teacher comment forms provides important and relevant information about how teachers in the May 2016 examination session viewed the examination paper. It must be emphasised that these forms, available on the OCC, provide 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 2016 HL Paper 3 examination was regarded as 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.

There were 29 respondents to the teacher comments form. 100% of respondents stated that the paper was an appropriate level of difficulty. 69% said that the paper was of a similar standard to last year's paper while a relatively high number (24%) felt it was a little easier.

Similar to last year, this year's extract presented a number of issues for the students. It has been the best yet in terms of achieving the right balance between readability/approachability and a stimulus to analysis and evaluation of the issues of doing philosophy/philosophical activity. The number of issues that would have been able to be identified by the average student was fair. However, there is still a concern that the text did not offer challenging ideas about doing philosophy and philosophical activity that would have prompted students to think deeply about some central assumptions in regard to doing philosophy (DP) and/or philosophical activity (PA). Instead, this response offered fairly straightforward statements that are reflected in many 'introduction to philosophy' texts.

In the pre-2016 subject guide, the approach to the analysis of the extract and its consideration was not made explicit. However, it was expected that the format of the response would be an
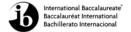
essay. The current guide is much clearer on this expectation, requiring candidates to undertake a compare and contrast approach in the format of an essay, not as a report or a reflection piece. This is an important change in the expectations for this paper. The more successful responses were those of candidates who identified, made reference to and utilized the pertinent issues arising from the extract in the development of their responses. To do this they drew upon the 1) numerous aspects of the course they had studied at HL (individual philosophers, schools of philosophy, critics of philosophy as an endeavour) in order to critically assess the nature of philosophy described in the text extract, including 2) their own experience of doing philosophy in the course.

As mentioned, the extract returned to being drawn from an introduction from a textbook. On the whole, most candidates understood the claims in the extract and as a result they were provoked into reflecting upon the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy, though not necessary using these categories. There were varying degrees of depth to the understanding of the extract and varying number of points selected. It is worth noting that a few selected points leading to an in-depth analysis (and evaluation) is considered to be a worthwhile response. The standard response should be a sufficient number of points (5-6) treated individually as part of a holistic assessment of the unseen extract. Regardless, 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 broadly defined were: the challenge of defining philosophy as a discipline, the paradoxical nature of philosophy reassessing its own nature, issue of practical importance, role of belief in philosophy, philosophy and dogma, the focus of philosophy on fundamental questions, philosophy's pursuit of decontextualized truths, the purpose of philosophy to generate meaning, as well as others.

The first issue was very popular for analysis and is a common topic in these kinds of extracts. However, there was a tendency for students to use this as an opportunity to 'throw their hands up in the air' philosophically speaking and deny there was a valid definition for philosophy as a discipline. This frequent response to defining philosophy in introductory textbooks should not be taken as definitive. Rather, it is indicative of the number of approaches to doing philosophy that could be canvased and each of these approaches has many advocates, who often have very clear ideas as to what doing philosophy is as an endeavour. Student should be encouraged to make a commitment to their understanding of doing philosophy as a philosopher, not a commentator on philosophy. This is essential to the success of their engagement with the course as it is currently designed – the emphasis is on doing philosophy not simply a history of ideas course.

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. These responses were clearly aware of how their studies in TOK, including their experiences in this classroom, were relevant to their understanding of the nature of philosophy in relation to other subjects.

Similar to previous years, candidates failed to use many of the more recent conceptions of philosophy. Candidates seemed unaware of some of the major debates about doing philosophy. These include the different methodologies, perceived purpose of doing philosophy, and so on. Students who had clearly completed an optional theme in Ethics seemed unaware of the implications of the metaethical element required to be studied for the issue of doing philosophy and philosophical activity. As such they missed some of the more nuanced avenues for analysis. Another example of this is the idea of the study of contested concepts, or Mary Midgley's conceptual engineering/plumbing; a common point of discussion in contemporary commentaries about doing philosophy. This lack of depth to their understanding of what philosophy has meant, and could mean, resulted in only a few students constructing an overall argument by referencing their own understanding of philosophy as a coherent practice. It is worth noting that in Spanish responses there was a slight greater tendency to include more sophisticated perspectives, such as those from Baudrillard, Taylor, Foucault and Singer.

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

While the evidence in 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. This does not seem to be changing. For example, candidates continue to tell a story about 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 unique nature of philosophy as a discipline, its role in exploring humanity and the world within which we exist, as well as the tools, methodologies, and skills its draws upon to do so. For example, very few responses explore the challenges of argument and justifying in philosophy given the diverse nature of evidence available to support a philosophical position. 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 course, many failed to understand that they were required to relate this experience to their evaluation of the philosophical perspective and/or issues raised in the text. For example, many responses contained references to classroom debate in relation to an ethical issue and occasionally 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. Many examiners frequently annotated the responses they were marking with 'Why?' as well as 'And?' indicating that the point being made was not being developed, simply stated or asserted as a self-evident truth. 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.

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The suggestion from many scripts 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:

- 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 questions

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:

The response is well structured, focused and effectively organized. There is appropriate use of philosophical vocabulary throughout the response.

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. Weaker candidates failed to develop coherent responses as a result of an apparent absence of planning and organization. Interestingly, the trend to write a plan at the start or end of the booklet was almost non-existent. Nonetheless, planning was evident in many responses however there is always room for improvement.

There is clear identification of the view(s) of philosophical activity presented in the unseen text. Effective references are made to the text.

Since the introduction of paper 3, many more candidates are able to systematically delineate and identify pertinent issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text. However, there is a still many responses that are not sufficiently identifying points made in the unseen text. While the identification of the issues is a skill the referencing of these points is only procedural. It assists the examiners if points are supported by either quotes or at least lines number (preferably both).

Stronger responses take time to identify the point using a quote and then explain the meaning of the point and its implications for doing philosophy.

The student draws explicitly on their personal experience of philosophical activity, using well-chosen examples or illustrations to support their points.

This requirement for a success response in Paper 3 used to be a problematic area for candidates, but recent sessions have indicated that this was no longer the case. This session's responses, however, were more likely to use their own personal experience of doing philosophy rather than different perspectives encounters during their course. Students are still referencing their study of Descartes's Mediations, the concerns about the existence of God in their Philosophy of Religion Optional Theme, or applied debates in the Ethics Theme. However, these tend to be descriptive rather than used to support a critical response to a point identified in the unseen text. Those that were able to accomplish this specific requirement did so in a relatively clear and convincing manner. There are still candidates who are clearly not comfortable with the expectations of this requirement of the examination. There is a tendency for students to connect a point in the text with a relevant experience and illustration without making a point. They need to be prepared to make relevant references to their own experience of doing philosophy and its implications as a result of following the course and to draw upon the perspectives encountered and explored in the process.

There is clear analysis of both similarities and differences between the student's personal experience of philosophical activity and the view(s) of philosophical activity presented.

There is now an explicit expectation that candidates will structure their response using a compare and contrast approach. It was felt by the examiners that this clear expectation of a compare and contrast structure had benefited students as they were able to respond systematically to the extract.

The response contains well-developed critical analysis. All, or nearly all, of the main points are justified. The response argues to a reasoned conclusion.

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.

This dot point assesses a candidate's ability to develop an evaluation of the points made in the text. It is also the most challenging one. This requires them to assess the validity of the insights into the nature of philosophy contained within the text in relation to the candidate's own understanding. Similarly, 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 points contained within the extract. In response they offered a position that was justified. If there was agreement evidence was required to be offered to demonstrate why they agreed with the explicit use of examples and insight. If they disagreed, there is a similar expectation. The strongest responses offered a focused and convincing critical evaluation of the main points made in the text. This remains the most challenging aspect of the paper 3 (and one across all sections of the philosophy exam). subsequently, candidates struggled to offer justification of their positions and therefore the development of an evaluation of the philosophical activity raised in the unseen text. 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

- 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.

- 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.
- Develop an understanding of the different approaches to, and goals for, doing philosophy and their associated issues. These can be developed using the framework of nature, function, meaning and methodology suggested in the subject guide for investigating of philosophical activity.
- Work with TOK teachers to facilitate the identification of links with the other Areas of Knowledge, using both the knowledge framework and the investigative framework used in paper 3 (the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy). Teachers should use the insights derived from TOK to encourage and enable candidates to identify and understand the unique features of philosophy as well as how other subjects contribute to and different from philosophy.
- 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). The new set of inquiry questions offered in the subject guide (p. 34) provide an excellent framework for designing specific, focused investigation into the issues of philosophical activity as the course progresses or during class time devoted to the HL programme.
- Identify, explain and practice the various skills that will be required in the examination situation. Many of these skills are an important of other subjects, especially the Language A subjects. The compare and contrast command term requires a specific essay response. The requirements for this type of essay response can be develop from, and reinforced by, a candidate's learning experiences in this subject.
- 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.
- Previous exam papers are still relevant to the current assessment. Markschemes are useful for developing an understanding of the common themes that emerge in unseen texts and even possibilities for teaching these in class. This knowledge bank is now an essential tool for developing candidate's successfully.
- 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. Encourage them to recognize their own philosophical understanding, and subsequent commitments, that emerge as the course processes.

- 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.