

November 2017 subject reports

Philosophy

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 53	54 - 66	67 - 79	80 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 25	26 - 37	38 - 50	51 - 63	64 - 75	76 - 100

Higher level/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

As was the case in the November 2016 session, in most instances the work submitted for moderation in the November 2017 session comfortably met the requirements and specifications for the Internal Assessment as set out in the current subject guide. Several samples exhibited very good to excellent levels of achievement of the objectives for this component of the course. Specifically, there was ample evidence to confirm that candidates selected non-philosophical stimulus items that were varied and, in many cases, original. The selected stimulus items lent themselves very well to the derivation of relevant philosophical issues and themes which were ideal for philosophically relevant critical analysis and evaluation. Candidates were, in general, able to demonstrate legitimate reference to the stimulus items while focusing their attention on the analysis of the philosophical issues

derived from them. The majority of the samples exhibited clear and coherent organisation and the sound use of appropriate philosophical vocabulary. It is worthwhile highlighting the demonstration of convincing instances of personal engagement and the use of supporting examples and illustrations. A variety of philosophical approaches, standpoints and methods were used to create interesting and engaging analyses.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Identification of issue and justification (3 marks)

In almost all cases, candidates could identify clearly the philosophical issue raised by the non-philosophical stimulus item. However, not all candidates were able to demonstrate and justify the connection between the stimulus item and the issue identified. In the best cases the identification was clear, crisp and focused and the justification of the connection was presented in a convincing and coherent manner.

Criterion B: Clarity (4 marks)

Most candidates presented work that was effectively organized, well-structured and focused on the development of a convincing analysis. The best samples were clear and coherent in the way the analysis was presented.

Criterion C: Knowledge and understanding (4 marks)

The levels of knowledge and understanding ranged from good to excellent. In general, candidates could display sound and, in the best cases, accurate and detailed knowledge of the material incorporated into the analyses. In all cases, philosophical vocabulary was used appropriately. Candidates could explain and explore the philosophical issue drawn from the stimulus item in a well-developed fashion.

Criterion D: Analysis (6 marks)

It was in this criterion that candidates experienced difficulties. However, in general, the material used in the development of the analyses was relevant and the examples used in support of the arguments were appropriate. The problem remained with the skill of analysis. Some candidates were unable to move from a strictly descriptive and informative treatment of the philosophical issue to a critical analysis of it. In addition, not all candidates argued from a consistently held position. A final difficulty was the failure to identify and treat counter-positions and counter-arguments to the issues being analyzed.

Criterion E: Evaluation (6 marks)

This was the second area in which candidates experienced some difficulties. In the best instances, candidates could produce a clear and coherent evaluation of alternative interpretations or points of view with regard to the material incorporated into the analysis. In these cases, justification for key points made was presented and a clear, coherent and focused conclusion was provided. In other cases, candidates were unable to engage in a convincing evaluation of the points they made in their analyses. One noticeable difficulty was the failure in several cases to include a well-developed conclusion to the analysis.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Teachers must be reminded to read carefully and attentively all information found in the current subject guide regarding the Internal Assessment component of the course.
- Teachers should be certain that candidates receive copies of all relevant information about the Internal Assessment along with copies of the assessment criteria. It is essential that students have this information clearly explained.
- Preparation of the Internal Assessment ought to be spread throughout the course in a timely manner so that candidates have time to develop their work in an optimal manner with sufficient opportunity for guidance and supervision by the teacher.
- Candidates should be encouraged to select short, clear and crisp non-philosophical stimulus items that are, literally, able to stimulate the discovery of a philosophical issue.
- Candidates should focus their attention on a single, interesting and challenging philosophical issue rather than attempting to analyze multiple issues.
- Candidates should be encouraged and inspired to treat the Philosophy Internal Assessment as a unique opportunity for them to 'do philosophy' in the spirit of the IB Philosophy course.
- Candidates must learn the difference between a strictly descriptive and informative treatment of a philosophical issue as opposed to an analytical and evaluative treatment of that issue.
- Candidates should be encouraged to engage personally and in a philosophically informed manner with the issue they are analyzing.
- Candidates must learn to identify, explain and justify the connection(s) between the stimulus item and the philosophical issue they will be analyzing.

Further comments

The samples submitted this session were in line with the specifications, requirements and objectives for this course component as outlined in the current subject guide. It is essential that teachers read and reflect upon the information incorporated into this report and that they take advantage of the information and material found in the current Teacher Support Material (TSM). Teachers should also make certain that they include comments explaining the marks they have awarded over the 5 assessment criteria as this information is helpful in the moderation process.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 7	8 - 14	15 - 24	25 - 35	36 - 45	46 - 56	57 - 75

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 16	17 - 22	23 - 29	30 - 35	36 - 50

General comments

As in the November 2016 session, this cohort presents varying levels of achievement. For example, the HL English subgroup generally showed very good to excellent achievement. SL English presented a very good achievement as a whole, since practically all exams demonstrated a good performance at least, with some excellent achievements. In HL Spanish, very few responses were close to the excellent achievement area, with only some responses within the very good area, down to mediocre. In a similar way, SL Spanish demonstrated generally very good performance, and from there down. What follows should be framed within these different kinds of achievements.

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

Some aspects of the tendencies and approaches to the questions are similar to what has been observed in previous sessions, which are generally present in the lower levels of achievement:

- Answers which do not consider the actual requests of the question. Some candidates simply disregard the question and apply what they have learnt, thus remolding the aims of the question to suit memorized responses
- Answers which 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 to, as with previous sessions, take the question as a “stimulus” (something which is explicitly referred to quite many times in this year’s responses, particularly in

- the Spanish responses)
- Responses which simply do not pay any attention to the central instruction given by the command terms “discuss” or “evaluate”
 - Answers which show 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. 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.

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

The markbands employed this session ask to work on the following paths: 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 seen in previous sessions, e. g.: 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 good and very good knowledge relevant to the core/optional theme to which the question referred. Good levels of knowledge and understanding of philosophers were shown, e.g. Plato, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill, Sartre, Rawls and Nozick.

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

Section A

Core Theme: What is a human being?

Question 1

There was no clear predominance between questions 1 and 2 in section A (considering HL and SL, and both English and Spanish). The quality of answers covered all degrees from excellent to very poor. In Spanish, mainly at SL but also with a significant number at HL there were typical approaches to section A both questions which were mere descriptions of the stimuli, with little, if any, further elaboration in the worst cases. A large group of weaker answers offered only a presentation of the ideas of an author without paying any attention to the rubric. The very good and excellent answers showed very good knowledge on the mind-body problem and the freedom and determinism discussion.

Question 2

The quality of answers covered all degrees from excellent to very poor. The responses considered a significant variety of issues including: relationships, gender issues, gender equality and gender roles in society and the mind-body problem of how we might know what the other is thinking or feeling. The very good and excellent answers showed very good knowledge on the mind-body problem and the freedom and determinism discussion.

Section B

Optional theme 1: Aesthetics

Question 3

The good answers showed good knowledge of Plato's and Aristotle's positions and in some cases other thinkers.

Question 4

Many of these answers presented very good examples, but the conceptual analysis was limited.

Optional theme 2: Epistemology

Question 5

In general, here the answers were quite weak, showing very limited structure and specific knowledge related to this optional theme.

Question 6

Some candidates were able to present some knowledge more specifically related to the question.

Optional theme 3: Ethics

Question 7

Clearly 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. They developed good analyses of the basic issues related to the foundation and nature of morals, asking whether ethics is mainly to do with principles, laws, rules, commandments - extending to decision-making processes, the involvement of conscience and responsibilities. The weaker answers here also tended to be descriptive.

Question 8

Many answers demonstrated at least satisfactory knowledge, and some of them demonstrated how to use it productively to justify personal responses to the claim “What’s the use of a fine house if you haven’t got a tolerable world to put it on?” The better answers explored, among others: ecology, animal rights, Gaia hypothesis, land and resources exploitation, pollution, distribution of wealth, health provision in different parts of the world, biomedical pressures caused by new technology. Aquinas, Aristotle and Singer were productively explored.

Optional theme 4: Philosophy and contemporary society

Question 9

The answers presented various forms of the social contract, e.g. Locke and Rousseau. In general, the answers mainly focused on the account of positions and the presentation of knowledge without more decisive analysis and discussion of the question.

Question 10

Few descriptive and general, narrative answers. Some stronger answers were seen, where the ideas of de Beauvoir were introduced, and in some cases analyzed to an extent.

Optional theme 5: Philosophy of religion

Question 11

Very few general, basic, responses without specific knowledge of this optional theme.

Question 12

Very few general, basic, responses without specific knowledge of this optional theme were presented.

Optional theme 6: Philosophy of science

Question 13

No answers to this question.

Question 14

No answers to this question.

Optional theme 7: Political philosophy

Question 15

A selection of answers presented very good knowledge in general and particularly of Rawls and Nozick, but only in some cases did they really try to relate these positions to the specific question.

Question 16

Many of the responses presented reasonable, good discussions and evaluations of human rights following two central features: its universality and inalienable character. They pointed out that since World War II, human rights have increasingly occupied a central position within the theory and practice of international law and politics and have received more attention within moral and political philosophy, stressing that the modern human rights movement was initiated by the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

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 specific question in section B
- Present relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge
- Explain the issue in a well-developed way
- Use philosophical vocabulary consistently 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.

Higher and standard level Paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 10	11 - 13	14 - 16	17 - 19	20 - 25

General comments

This session did not present specific issues, except for some points of discussion that are highlighted in the next section. As always, the language differences tend to be clear and Spanish language scripts tend to present the issues below in a more evident manner.

Generally speaking, there is an issue that a number of scripts across all the components, that is that candidates tend to offer unbalanced responses, which overestimate the role of descriptive and explicative content, to the detriment of the evaluative and personal analysis. This issue is not isolated in paper 2.

There has, however, been improvement in candidate' performance, presenting a stronger understanding of the demands of both Part A and B as schools become more familiar with the requirements that were new as of May 2016.

Even the best responses tend to present a limited use of the text, with little use of references or clear connections to the original text. Most of the responses tend to take into account knowledge and description, but do not really work on the full demands of the topics and philosophy in general terms. In the best responses, language still tends to be appropriate, showing a clear knowledge of the technical terms, which represents a part of the descriptive side of the response.

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

The usual difficulties were witnessed in the scripts - specifically, the lack of a real critical and/or personal analysis, the lack of direct reference and/or use of texts, the lack of references to other authors/ideas.

The selection of texts is very limited to the usual and more popular texts (Plato and Descartes in English, Plato and Taylor in Spanish), implying a clear conformism of the responses, which is very contradictory with the inner nature of philosophy and of the philosophy course/exam. Moreover, the worrying paradox is that this issue is particularly clear in the better responses much more than in the weaker ones: while the weaker responses are often the result of a free interpretation and production of a candidate (who has not understood the text or is not able to explain and explore it), the better responses are in almost all the cases the result of a

common structure, which shows that these responses have been prepared following clear indications or even a model, absolutely and easily identifiable in each response.

In too many cases the use of the text is very limited, with no references. There are references to other authors in the critical section of the response, though – as stated above – this often looks like the adherence to a specific prepared model (the mentioned authors are always the same), rather than a real, authentic construction of the candidate. This could be confirmed by the fact that even the better responses, which present counter-arguments and reference to other authors, do not present personal criticism or views (which cannot be prepared ahead).

Along with the new issues that emerged from the new 2016 model and assessment, the traditional issues are still present: 1) the limited use of the text: it is important to understand that a satisfactory and complete response should begin with an accurate reading and analysis of the source; 2) it is important for the candidates to understand that the critical and personal analyses are not to be thought of as bullet points of a checklist, but as logical parts of the development of their own responses.

So, it is possible to synthesize the issues and weaknesses as follows:

- A general lack of personal and critical analysis, based on the fact that such analyses are often presented as a necessary, conclusive part at the very end of the script, instead of being a “natural” part that is disseminated along the development of the argument
- Lack or very limited use of bibliographic references or clear, direct textual use; candidates rarely seem to clearly demonstrate their knowledge of the text
- Tendency to populate the script with as many authors or theories as possible, with a limited analysis of them, because an extension of elements usually corresponds to a superficial view of them and the impossibility of an in-depth analysis. Candidates seem to consider the mention of names, which end by taking the shape of a mere listing, as a good approach
- Use of ‘pre-prepared’ models that offer valuable structures and content, to the detriment of personal philosophical engagement and analysis.

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

Beyond the above issues, responses tend to present a better understanding of the new 2016 model in P2, though several responses still present one part only (rather than parts A and B). Moreover, responses tend to better consider the role of evaluation and analysis, though this is often counter-balanced by weaker responses to part A.

In general, candidates demonstrated satisfactory to very good knowledge and understanding of the prescribed texts. More specifically, stronger candidates exhibited familiarity with the arguments of the text relevant to the question set, the use of appropriate philosophical language and of the idiom of the text, and an awareness of the arguments developed by the authors of the text. Weaker candidates were unable to engage with the text in more than a descriptive and occasionally superficial manner. Only the weakest candidates were unable to present evidence that the text had been read and analysed.

The strongest candidates could situate specific arguments in the text into the general context of the prescribed text as a whole, finding interesting and clear connections to other authors and/or concepts. These candidates could progress to deep analyses, wide development and rich presence of quotes/references/examples. The critical part was very well-structured, with sound connections, as were the personal evaluations that these candidates advanced to.

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

Generally, the best scripts are very well-structured, presenting consistent arguments, detailed descriptions, good and wide use of the text, rich use of references and linkages, appropriate language and a personal and critical analysis.

As usually, the weaker responses do not offer any satisfactory analysis of the topic, with small quantity of data, barely describing the argument, with not much reasoning or development and a very poor language. The best responses, though well-structured, generally present limited development, with a little use of text or references, not many connections; moreover, candidates tend to underestimate the meaning and function of the critical and personal analyses, focusing on them more as necessary elements rather than as natural steps of the development of their arguments. Language is not always appropriate, though the best responses show a clear knowledge of the most technical philosophical terms.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

The following are suggestions related to the experienced issues:

- Candidates 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 for the assessment of a candidate's response.
- Candidates must pay attention to the wording of those examination questions that ask candidates to make connections between or amongst ideas, themes, or issues raised in a prescribed text – which is something crucial for P2.
- While the discussion, analysis and evaluation of a prescribed text in a classroom situation is essential, it might be a good idea to provide candidates with at least one dependable 'commentary' on the relevant text. If the purchase of such a text is not possible for budgetary reasons, internet sites can be explored for electronic copies of such texts. Recommendations for websites providing access to electronic versions of philosophical texts can be found on the PRCIt is vital to pay attention to the use of the sources from the Internet, in order to avoid cases of plagiarism.
- Teachers ought to help candidates 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.
- Teachers should encourage candidates 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 candidates understand the importance of making direct and indirect references to the text in the development of their responses. It might be helpful to introduce them to some of the techniques used: quoting key words or short, key phrases; summarising lengthier central arguments, etc.
- Teachers should introduce their candidates to a variety of interpretations of the chosen text. This information should be used in the development of counter-arguments.
- Candidates should be taught to develop contemporary applications of the arguments of the prescribed texts studied in class. This is especially the case with those authors that tend to treat political matters.
- Teachers should use more effectively the IB's online resources (PRC and discussion forums) for assistance and sharing of information regarding the prescribed texts studied in class. Whenever appropriate, this information should be shared with candidates.
- Teachers ought to read carefully the annual Subject Reports that are published on the PRC philosophy page. 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 should recommend that their students write clearly.
- Teachers should remind their students that the P2 questions have two parts and both parts have to be responded to, separately.

One more consideration focuses on the limited range of chosen topics: candidates tend to choose a few topics only, which become very popular. Some topics are never chosen. This seems to reflect the popularity of some philosophers and/or arguments in the teaching: if this is the case, this could limit the real possibilities of the candidates to freely move within all the possible topics, resulting in a general limitation of their personal engagement and consideration of making philosophy.

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 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

General comments

The HL Extension (HL 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. More specifically, and as stated in the current subject guide, the HL Extension "... is an opportunity for HL students to engage in a deeper exploration of the nature, function,

meaning and methodology of philosophy. This 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.” By reflecting on their own experience of “doing philosophy” HL students are required to spend time, throughout the course and in the context of each of the HL course components, developing a view of their personal experience of doing philosophy. Having accomplished this, they are invited to find in the HL Extension (Paper 3) the challenge of comparing their personal understanding of what philosophy is to the views presented by the author of the unseen text extract.

The purpose of this examination is described in the current *Subject Guide* 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.” Specifically, HL students are challenged to read the text extract and, on the basis of the content of that extract, engage the following skills:

- Develop an organized response which uses appropriate philosophical vocabulary
- Identify the views of philosophical activity presented in the unseen text
- Make relevant references to the text
- Draw on their own understanding and experience of philosophy using examples and illustrations
- Analyse the similarities and differences between their own experience of philosophical activity with those expressed in the unseen text
- Develop a response which displays analysis, a justification of points raised and a conclusion

Paper 3 continues to be a relevant and challenging component of the HL Philosophy course. The information, comments and suggestions incorporated into the Subject Report are all meant to 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 the HL Extension (Paper 3).

Disappointingly, a very small number of teachers submitted their teacher comments regarding the quality of the HL Paper 3 examination paper. Hence, it is difficult to formulate a detailed summary of the data submitted. Nevertheless, it appears that there were no general difficulties signaled about the suitability of the paper in terms of clarity and presentation.

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

Major areas of concern include the following:

- Failure to take into account the nature of the exercise as set out in the examination rubric which clearly states: *Compare and contrast the view(s) of philosophical activity presented in the text below, with your own experience and*

understanding of what is involved in doing philosophy.

- Many students appear to have failed to develop throughout the course an appreciation of what their own experience and understanding of what is involved in doing philosophy is. This impacts directly and negatively on their ability to address the requirements set out in the examination rubric.
- A prevalent tendency to treat Paper 3 **solely** as an exercise in presenting a very detailed and fundamentally descriptive summary of the arguments and points raised in the text extract. While this is ONE of the requisites of a successful Paper 3 response, it should not become the ONLY skill demonstrated by a student.
- A clear tendency to provide detailed outlines of the philosophical positions of some of the philosophers mentioned in the unseen text without showing how this information relates to the unseen text and its arguments, the views of philosophy presented in the text or to the student's personal experience of philosophical activity and/or the experience of the course
- Failure to make specific references to relevant portions of the text itself (key words, short phrases, brief sentences, paraphrases, line numbers, etc.) and an associated failure to incorporate text references into a 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 critical analysis and evaluation of the issues raised in the text extract
- Failure to incorporate into the response clear, specific and relevant references to the personal experience of philosophy and philosophical activity encountered throughout the whole HL course
- Failure to discuss adequately the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy as presented in the text
- In a small number of cases, failure to take the content of the unseen text into account at all.

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

The text extract that appeared in November 2017 HL Paper 3 examination was of a very manageable length and was particularly suitable to enable candidates to reflect on the nature of philosophy, the skills involved in philosophical activity, and the experience of doing philosophy from a variety of perspectives. While there is certainly neither a correct nor an 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, referred to and utilised 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. Many students presented convincing critiques of some of the arguments set out in the text showing how their own personal understanding of philosophical activity differed with those presented in the text extract. Students were quite well equipped to make references to the experience of their own philosophy classes (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.). The evidence provided by student responses demonstrates that the extract provided a reasonable number of opportunities for candidates to engage personally with the text and its arguments.

More specifically, some of the areas in which candidates appeared well prepared include the following:

- The presentation of clearly organised, 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 stimulus 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

With the introduction of assessment markbands for the HL Extension (Paper 3) the determination of an effective and systematic method of addressing the strengths and weaknesses of candidates in the treatment of the question needs to be created. One approach is to explore them in terms of the formal HL Paper 3 assessment markband level descriptors at the 21-25 band:

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

It was not always the case that students were successful regarding the organization and presentation of their responses. Occasionally, it was difficult to determine precisely what a response was attempting to achieve. This was a result of either not effectively and/or consistently linking with the content of the text extract or a failure to understand what was

expected in the development of a HL Paper 3 response. The weakest students failed in a serious manner to demonstrate any sense of organisation. Perhaps this was the result of failing to plan and organize their responses effectively. These responses offered neither introductory nor concluding paragraphs and only provided a random assembly of short paragraphs discussing some ideas found in the text extract. On the other hand, several students did, in fact, include short plans at the beginning of their responses and this evidently helped in keeping them generally focused on the task at hand. Regarding the stronger responses, there was evidence of a coherent plan for tackling the text extract and the use of appropriate philosophical vocabulary. Terminology drawn from the text extract itself, was used in the development of these responses. In most cases, responses were adequately focused and the analyses sustained.

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

Students generally did not experience difficulties in this area and were able, in varying degrees of clarity, precision and relevance, to identify pertinent issues regarding philosophical activity raised in the text. Difficulties occurred in how precise and how relevant the issues identified were to develop a comprehensive treatment of the text extract. However, in the better cases, candidates cited key words, phrases or referred to line numbers and used these text references effectively in developing their responses. Weaker responses ranged from those that made few or no references to the text or only made general summative references to the sense of key points set out in the text. The best responses demonstrated how the text reference related to a student's experience of philosophical activity and compared and contrasted the text reference to that experience. A final difficulty in this area of assessment was a marked tendency of many students to venture off into a detailed explanation of the philosophical views of some of the philosophers mentioned in the text.

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 successful Paper 3 response presented the greatest difficulty for many students. Students that managed to make references to their personal experience of philosophy generally did so in two ways:

- Direct references to how a perspective presented in the text extract recalled an experience or activity in the philosophy course itself;
- Direct references to their own personal experience of engaging the skills or information learned in the course to an everyday experience outside the classroom situation.

Stronger responses incorporated these references to the personal experience of philosophical activity in support of the critical treatment of the material drawn from the text extract. Weaker students still displayed hesitation in incorporating references to their personal experience of philosophical activity. This might be explained either by lack of preparation on the part of the teacher for meeting this requirement or by students not having taken time throughout the philosophy course to develop their own personal perspective on the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy and philosophical activity.

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.

Students need to understand precisely that the HL Extension assessment markbands set out an explicit expectation that they will structure their response using a compare and contrast methodology which situates the view(s) of philosophical activity presented in the text extract against their own personal view of philosophical activity. Of course, students who were weak in having developed a view of their personal experience of philosophical activity during the philosophy course were at a definite disadvantage in this area. The strongest students did very well in this area and were able to present convincing comparative analyses. Many students, however, confused having a view of their personal experience of philosophical activity with reiterating in descriptive fashion links between what they had learned in the course (e.g. Plato's epistemology or Descartes' methodological doubt) in weak relationship with a statement drawn from the text.

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

This criterion assesses a student's ability to engage critically and analytically with the text and the arguments put forth in the text. The best responses avoided making generalised 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, their experience of the philosophy course and the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of the text. The strongest responses offered a focused and convincing critical evaluation of the main arguments of the text. Unfortunately, not all students were able to respond optimally to the expectation of this criterion in terms of the development of an analytical and evaluative assessment of 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. A notable weakness amongst many candidates was the failure to use the text in the strategic development of a convincing and compelling response. Weaker candidates tended to remain quite descriptive, only summarising what was said in the text extract without any critical treatment whatsoever.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

- Introduce candidates early in the course to the HL Paper 3 specification (rubric and format). Make certain that future candidates understand precisely how this component fits into the HL Philosophy course.
- Carefully read and reflect upon the portions of the current Subject Guide that outline the nature of this course component. Share this material with future candidates and offer a clear and concise explanation of all information.
- Carefully read the 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 PRC devoted to various aspects of HL Paper 3 and the resource links that contain materials relevant for HL Paper 3 preparation
- Integrate 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)
- 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
- Make certain that future candidates understand the HL Extension assessment markbands.
- Identify, explain and practice the various skills that will be 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. Demonstrate how this information can be introduced into a Paper 3 response.
- 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' to gain experience and confidence in writing examination responses
- Work with TOK teachers to facilitate the identification of links with the other Areas of Knowledge and Ways of Knowing, using both the knowledge and investigative frameworks 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.
- Participate in IB Philosophy workshops which, by default, offer sessions on Paper 3 presentation and preparation.