

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Philosophy B: Engaging Arguments (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J72T 47
SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2024–25

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 2.0) August 2024

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit develops learners' knowledge of philosophy by introducing classic texts in the history of Western philosophy. Learners develop their skills in critical analysis and become familiar with the style of language in which philosophy is written.

Learners look at three philosophical texts and evaluate key arguments. By examining philosophical arguments in their context, learners gain experience by engaging with complex texts from a variety of historical periods.

The unit is aimed at learners who have a general interest in philosophy, as well as those who want to use it as the basis for further study.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion. However, we recommend that learners have one or more of the following:

- ◆ good communication skills
- ◆ previous study of philosophy, for example National Qualifications at SCQF levels 5 or 6, or other similar qualifications
- ◆ other knowledge, skills and experience relevant to the unit

The unit works well alongside Philosophy A: Knowledge and Truth.

Learners normally study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences. They can also study it on a stand-alone basis.

If learners study the unit as part of HNC Social Sciences, they may be able to progress to HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 explain key themes and arguments in Plato's *Republic*
- 2 evaluate key themes and arguments in contrasting philosophical texts

Evidence requirements

Learners should provide written or oral evidence covering all unit outcomes, produced under open-book conditions. You should give the task at an appropriate point in the unit. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Written responses must consist of approximately 2,000 words, and oral responses must be 12 to 15 minutes in duration.

Learners provide evidence relating to Plato's *Republic* and one other contrasting text of their choice.

Learners' responses must include:

- ◆ an explanation of one key theme in Plato's *Republic*
- ◆ an explanation of Plato's arguments on a topic from Plato's *Republic*
- ◆ an explanation of the key theme(s) of a contrasting philosophical text
- ◆ an explanation of the established position on the contrasting philosophical text on the same topic as used in the explanation of Plato's arguments above.
- ◆ an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of established positions in the two contrasting philosophical texts (Plato's *Republic* and one other)
- ◆ a personal conclusion drawn from the evaluation
- ◆ appropriate terminology

You can choose to use a mix of assessment methods across a group, depending on what is most suitable for each learner; for example, some could give a written response and others could give an oral response.

Learners must fully reference their assessment, using reliable sources appropriate for SCQF level 7. They must list all sources in a bibliography or reference list, in a recognised standard format, such as Harvard or APA.

The SCQF level of the unit provides additional context relating to the quality of evidence. Learners should:

- ◆ contribute information that is complex, accurate and relevant to its purpose and audience
- ◆ present ideas clearly and coherently
- ◆ use a structure that is appropriate to the purpose
- ◆ provide supporting evidence or references

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ key themes and arguments in Plato's <i>Republic</i>, including Plato's metaphysics and epistemology: the theory of the forms and allegories of the sun, the divided line, and the cave◆ Plato's social and political philosophy: philosopher kings, forms of government, ideal state	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ explain key themes and arguments in Plato's <i>Republic</i>
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ key themes and arguments in contrasting philosophical texts	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ evaluate the arguments relating to Plato's <i>Republic</i> and one contrasting philosophical text

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the social sciences sector.

The unit helps learners develop the meta-skills of self-management, social intelligence and innovation. Learners should develop meta-skills naturally throughout the unit. You should encourage learners to develop a minimum of one area in each of the three categories, but they do not need to cover all suggested subsections. The following suggestions may help shape delivery and assessment, and vary depending on the chosen topics and assessment method.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: identifying and explaining key themes and arguments in three philosophical texts
- ◆ adapting: acquiring new knowledge and skills, as well as using different technologies to communicate and complete assessments; working through a virtual learning environment (VLE); reflecting on their performance
- ◆ integrity: engaging with different philosophical arguments and identifying their value in content and in context; exploring ethics in the context of philosophical texts; taking part in class discussions to support good working relationships
- ◆ initiative: reading and thinking about philosophical themes and arguments; reaching a considered conclusion using intuition and careful thought

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: debating philosophical arguments; explaining ideas; using digital technology to complete written and/or oral assessments to convey understanding of topics
- ◆ feeling: giving and taking time to discuss key arguments and theories, and to understand other perspectives; respecting other viewpoints in discussions

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: learning about key themes through independent research and class discussion and debates; questioning motives and ideas
- ◆ sense-making: drawing valid and measured conclusions based on evaluation of evidence
- ◆ critical thinking: identifying, explaining, and evaluating philosophical arguments; making logical connections and reasoned judgements through discussion; formulating responses; drawing conclusions based on evidence

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Learners could also develop other meta-skills in the unit, depending on the learning and teaching activities you carry out. These include:

- ◆ social intelligence: collaborating, leading
- ◆ innovation: creativity

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Communication

Learners develop communication skills in formative and summative assessment. It is part of the evidence requirements for this unit to ensure learners convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with academic references where appropriate. You can give learners opportunities to carry out oral presentations and engage in discussions.

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to produce assessments, and internet sources to research information on philosophical concepts, debates and issues. You can give them guidance on appropriate sources. Using a VLE also supports digital skills.

Learning for Sustainability

Learning for Sustainability aims to build the values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and confidence needed to develop practices and take decisions that are compatible with a sustainable and equitable society. In the unit, there are opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of social sustainability while studying Plato's social and political philosophy, which may link to [the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The unit fits with the following UN Sustainable Development Goal:

16 Peace, justice and strong institutions: through exploring how philosophical themes and arguments are applied worldwide across areas such as education, politics, health, science and religion in the present day.

The unit could fit with other UN Sustainable Development Goals, depending on the subjects discussed during delivery, as philosophy is concerned with dealing with fundamental questions about the world and our experience.

Delivery of unit

The unit is in the 'named social sciences' section of HNC Social Sciences. You can deliver it as part of the group award or as a stand-alone unit.

It is one of two philosophy units within HNC Social Sciences. This unit works well alongside Philosophy A: Knowledge and Truth.

The amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion; overall unit delivery time is a notional 80 hours of contact time for delivery and assessment. We expect learners to commit to a further 80 hours of self-directed study. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment

Outcome 1 — Explain key themes and arguments in Plato's *Republic*
(30 hours).

Outcome 2 — Evaluate key themes and arguments in contrasting philosophical texts
(50 hours).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

Content and context for this unit

The unit aims to give learners a grounding in a variety of texts from the history of Western philosophy. You should introduce learners to at least three texts, although you only assess learners on two (Plato's and one other). Learners can tackle relatively contemporary texts as well as Plato's *Republic*. We have chosen Plato's *Republic* as a mandatory text because of the range of topics it tackles, the variety of interesting passages it contains, its historical significance, and the accessible language in its modern English translation. You can choose the remaining texts, but you should make sure the accessibility of the language is suitable for the level of the unit.

You should give some historical background to contextualise the text, as well as some relevant biographical detail of the philosophers. Some key questions to prepare the learners for exploring a text might be:

- ◆ What key events influenced the arguments in the text?
- ◆ What movements or schools of thought does the author exemplify?
- ◆ What contemporary debate(s) does this text contribute to?

Approaches to delivery

You should structure the learning and teaching programme to allow time for learners to develop meta-skills, and academic and other transferable skills. You should also allow for assessment practice within the notional hours suggested.

You can shape delivery and assessment to support learners to develop their academic skills, such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay-writing skills and questioning ability. You can design formative and summative activities and assessments that encourage learners to practice the skills they need to progress to the next level of study.

Learners can benefit from a varied and active learning approach, where they engage in supported, independent and collaborative learning. You should encourage learners to take a participative and practical approach. Delivery methods could include:

- ◆ demonstration
- ◆ tutorial question and answer sessions
- ◆ debate
- ◆ individual and group research tasks
- ◆ presenting findings
- ◆ VLE
- ◆ digital tools and social media
- ◆ film and visual images
- ◆ close reading of sources

It would be useful for learners to have access to a laptop or other digital device.

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

You should encourage a questioning approach, as it leads learners to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. This empowers learners by building on essential, transferable skills.

The section on meta-skills provides further guidance on incorporating different skills into delivery and evidence.

You should deliver the unit in a learner-centred manner and always encourage a questioning approach. In doing so, you engage learners and encourage them to think like social scientists and be analytical and enquiring, rather than passively accepting facts. Developing essential transferable skills also helps learners access further study and employment.

You should introduce two further contrasting texts in addition to Plato's *Republic* for outcome 2. Learners can choose which of these contrasting texts they use in their assessment.

The two texts below are suitable for outcome 2. They both tackle several similar themes — such as epistemology, metaphysics and religious knowledge — and stand on opposing sides of a number of debates. This means that you can draw interesting contrasts and comparisons between them and Plato's work.

- ◆ René Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy*
 - method of doubt
 - the cogito
 - God as guarantor of clear and distinct perceptions
 - resolution of doubts

- ◆ David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
 - theory of impressions and ideas
 - Hume's fork
 - causation
 - animals

You can choose alternative contrasting texts, which explore at least one common theme or topic, to take advantage of particular areas of expertise. These could include:

- ◆ Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*
 - social contract
 - civil peace
 - social unity

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- ◆ John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*
 - tyranny
 - religion
 - utilitarianism

- ◆ Immanuel Kant: *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
 - categorical imperative
 - ethics

- ◆ Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *The Social Contract*
 - liberty and law
 - freedom and justice

It may be useful for learners to develop a timeline to add some context around certain events and philosophical changes across time and cultures.

Approaches to assessment

You can generate evidence using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable for learners.

Learners can choose to submit their assessment evidence in any format that meets each outcome. We recommend that you assess the unit holistically, as that is best to reduce the learners' assessment burden. You can decide to use a portfolio approach with two or more assessment tasks issued at different times in the unit delivery, if that is better for your learners.

Learners could address key themes and arguments in Plato's *Republic* and compare them with one other text. For example, for outcome 1, learners could explain Plato's metaphysics and epistemology. For outcome 2, they could evaluate the theme of epistemology (rationalism, scepticism and empiricism) in Plato's *Republic* and either of Descartes' or Hume's theories of knowledge, and reach a measured conclusion by drawing on each argument.

Alternatively, learners could explain Plato's theme of political philosophy and the ideal state (covering outcome 1), and evaluate Rousseau's key themes of democracy and the social contract (covering outcome 2), using points from each perspective to help reach a conclusion.

The assessment could take the form of an open-book essay question or a set of structured questions. Learners must provide a written response of approximately 2,000 words, or an individual oral presentation or poster exhibition of 12 to 15 minutes in duration, or any other method that appropriately meets the evidence requirements. For example, learners could provide the evidence in the form of an individual blog or website, consisting of approximately 2,000 words.

You can choose to use a mix of methods across a group, as it may be more suitable for some learners to give a written response and for others to use an oral method. Whichever method learners choose, they must be able to access notes, textbooks and other materials, as it is an open-book assessment.

If learners choose an oral method, we recommend that you record this in some form or provide assessor notes on the presentation for external verification purposes. Learners must show evidence of meeting all evidence requirements. Ideally, they would complete oral presentations or poster exhibitions individually. If a group presentation is used, individual learners must show coverage of all evidence requirements. To do this, they may need to provide an essay or additional responses to structured questions. Learners should submit their work for marking on a date that you have provided or agreed with them.

Learners can combine a poster exhibition with an oral presentation. For example, a learner could produce a detailed poster of Plato's arguments on epistemology and cover the second philosophical text's arguments in an oral presentation, using presentation software. In this case, the total time across both outcomes and all evidence requirements would be 12 to 15 minutes. So, the learner would spend 12 to 15 minutes orally presenting the poster content.

You could combine this unit with Philosophy A: Knowledge and Truth in an enhanced project combined assessment.

You should make learners aware of the importance of good judgement in selecting appropriate academic sources. You should encourage them to choose academic sources rather than generic search engines, to enable them to be more confident of information and better equipped to progress to SCQF level 8 units.

If learners are creating a blog or website for their assessment, it should not be in the public domain. Rather, it should be on an intranet or private area of your VLE to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

Authenticating learners' work is essential. You could collect notes or visual presentation materials from learners as further evidence of meeting SCQF level 7 in the presentation. You should monitor learners' progress throughout to authenticate submitted work. Where possible, you should use plagiarism-detection software.

It is important that learners' responses to the assessment are at SCQF level 7.

Opportunities for e-assessment

Assessment that is supported by ICT, such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software, may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit.

If your centre wants to use e-assessment, you must ensure that you apply the national standard to all evidence and that conditions of assessment (as specified in the evidence requirements) are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence.

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

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This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

The unit develops your knowledge of philosophy by introducing you to classic texts in the history of Western philosophy.

Before you start the unit, you should have good communication skills and an interest in philosophy. It would also be helpful to have some basic digital skills.

During the unit, you learn about the key themes and arguments in three philosophical texts, including Plato's *Republic*. Your lecturer will select others that explore a common theme. You are assessed on Plato's *Republic* and one other contrasting text.

You also learn how to evaluate and draw valid and measured conclusions on key themes and arguments in a text, and become familiar with the style of language in which philosophy is written.

On completing the unit, you are able to:

- 1 explain key themes and arguments in Plato's *Republic*
- 2 evaluate key themes and arguments in contrasting philosophical texts

You are assessed using an open-book assessment covering both unit outcomes. This means that you have access to materials such as textbooks, notes and your VLE. You can give your assessment response in writing or orally. If your response is written, it must be approximately 2,000 words, and if it is oral, it must be between 12 and 15 minutes long.

During the unit, you develop academic skills such as time management, multi-tasking ability, digital skills, essay-writing skills and questioning ability.

You also develop key literacies, such as communication. You learn to convey complex ideas in a well-structured and coherent way, with references where appropriate. Your lecturer may also use oral presentations and discussions to help you improve your communication skills. You develop digital skills and computer literacy by using digital packages to complete assessments, and internet sources to research information on philosophical arguments.

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The unit can support learning in other related units, such as Philosophy A: Knowledge and Truth. You may be able to study HND Social Sciences or a degree programme in a related subject if you study this unit as part of HNC Social Sciences.

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, you develop meta-skills to enhance your employability in the social sciences sector.

Meta-skills include self-management, social intelligence and innovation.

You develop these naturally as you take part in the range of learning and teaching activities and produce assessment responses. Improving meta-skills, such as organising your time (self-management) and communicating ideas clearly (social intelligence) is useful for current and future study, and employment.

Administrative information

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Superclass: DE

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date
2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Removed reference to the requirement to use holistic assessment in 'Evidence requirements', and in 'Information for learners'.◆ In 'Approaches to assessment' additional words that a holistic or portfolio approach can be used were added. Also, additional information allowing group presentations was added.	May 2024

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.