

Philosophy guide

First assessment 2025

Philosophy guide

First assessment 2025

Diploma Programme

Philosophy guide

Published February 2023

Published on behalf of the International Baccalaureate Organization, a not-for-profit educational foundation of 15 Route des Morillons, 1218 Le Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland by the

International Baccalaureate Organization (UK) Ltd
Peterson House, Malthouse Avenue, Cardiff Gate
Cardiff, Wales CF23 8GL
United Kingdom
Website: ibo.org

© International Baccalaureate Organization 2023

The International Baccalaureate Organization (known as the IB) offers four high-quality and challenging educational programmes for a worldwide community of schools, aiming to create a better, more peaceful world. This publication is one of a range of materials produced to support these programmes.

The IB may use a variety of sources in its work and check information to verify accuracy and authenticity, particularly when using community-based knowledge sources such as Wikipedia. The IB respects the principles of intellectual property and makes strenuous efforts to identify and obtain permission before publication from rights holders of all copyright material used. The IB is grateful for permissions received for material used in this publication and will be pleased to correct any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the IB's prior written permission, or as expressly permitted by the [Rules for use of IB Intellectual Property](#).

IB merchandise and publications can be purchased through the [IB Store](#) (email: sales@ibo.org). Any commercial use of IB publications (whether fee-covered or commercial) by third parties acting in the IB's ecosystem without a formal relationship with the IB (including but not limited to tutoring organizations, professional development providers, educational publishers and operators of curriculum mapping or teacher resource digital platforms, etc.) is prohibited and requires a subsequent written licence from the IB. Licence requests should be sent to copyright@ibo.org. More information can be obtained on the [IB public website](#).

IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

INQUIRERS

We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

KNOWLEDGEABLE

We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

THINKERS

We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

COMMUNICATORS

We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

PRINCIPLED

We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

OPEN-MINDED

We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

CARING

We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

RISK-TAKERS

We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

BALANCED

We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

REFLECTIVE

We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose of this document	1
The Diploma Programme	2
Nature of the subject	6
Aims	8
Assessment objectives	9
Syllabus	10
Syllabus outline	10
Syllabus content	11
Assessment	32
Assessment in the Diploma Programme	32
Assessment outline—SL	35
Assessment outline—HL	36
External assessment	37
Internal assessment	45
Approaches to learning and approaches to teaching	50
The learning and teaching of philosophy	50
Appendices	53
Glossary of command terms for philosophy	53
Bibliography	54

Purpose of this document

This publication is intended to guide the planning, teaching and assessment of the subject in schools. Subject teachers are the primary audience, although it is expected that teachers will use the guide to inform students and parents about the subject.

This guide can be found on the subject page of the Programme Resource Centre at resources.ibo.org, a password-protected website designed to support IB educators. It can also be purchased from the IB store at store.ibo.org.

Additional resources

Additional publications such as specimen papers and markschemes, teacher support materials, subject reports and grade descriptors can also be found on the Programme Resource Centre. Past examination papers as well as markschemes can be purchased from the IB store.

Teachers are encouraged to check the Programme Resource Centre for additional resources created or used by other teachers. Teachers can provide details of useful resources, for example: websites, books, videos, journals or teaching ideas.

Acknowledgement

The IB wishes to thank the educators and associated schools for generously contributing time and resources to the production of this guide.

First assessment 2025

The Diploma Programme

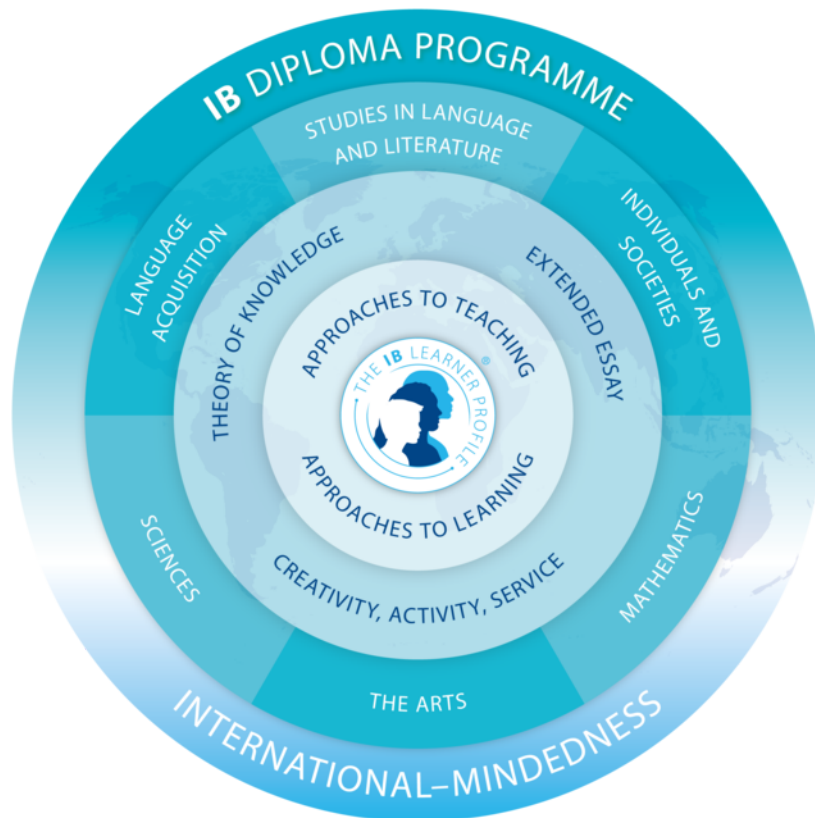
The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

The Diploma Programme model

The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core (see figure 1). It encourages the concurrent study of a broad range of academic areas. Students study two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language), a humanities or social science subject, an experimental science, mathematics and one of the creative arts. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

Figure 1

Diploma Programme model



Choosing the right combination

Students are required to choose one subject from each of the six academic areas, although they can, instead of an arts subject, choose two subjects from another area. Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL.

At both levels, many skills are developed, especially those of critical thinking and analysis. At the end of the course, students' abilities are measured by means of external assessment. Many subjects contain some element of coursework assessed by teachers.

The core of the Diploma Programme model

All Diploma Programme students participate in the three course elements that make up the core of the model.

Theory of knowledge (TOK) is a course that is fundamentally about critical thinking and inquiry into the process of knowing rather than about learning a specific body of knowledge. The TOK course examines the nature of knowledge and how we know what we claim to know. It does this by encouraging students to analyse knowledge claims and explore questions about the construction of knowledge. The task of TOK is to emphasize connections between areas of shared knowledge and link them to personal knowledge in such a way that an individual becomes more aware of their own perspectives and how they might differ from others.

In TOK, students explore the means of producing knowledge within the core theme of "knowledge and the knower" as well as within various optional themes (knowledge and technology, knowledge and politics, knowledge and language, knowledge and religion, and knowledge and indigenous societies) and areas of knowledge (the arts, natural sciences, human sciences, history, and mathematics). The course also encourages students to make comparisons between different areas of knowledge and reflect on how knowledge is arrived at in the various disciplines, what the disciplines have in common, and the differences between them.

Creativity, activity, service (CAS) is at the heart of the Diploma Programme. The emphasis in CAS is on helping students to develop their own identities, in accordance with the ethical principles embodied in the IB mission statement and the IB learner profile. It involves students in a range of activities alongside their academic studies throughout the Diploma Programme. The three strands of CAS are creativity (arts, and other experiences that involve creative thinking), activity (physical exertion contributing to a healthy lifestyle) and service (an unpaid and voluntary exchange that has a learning benefit for the student). Possibly, more than any other component in the Diploma Programme, CAS contributes to the IB's mission to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

The extended essay (EE), including the world studies extended essay, offers the opportunity for IB students to investigate a topic of special interest, in the form of a 4,000-word piece of independent research. The area of research undertaken is chosen from one of the students' six Diploma Programme subjects, or in the case of the inter-disciplinary world studies essay, two subjects, and acquaints them with the independent research and writing skills expected at university. This leads to a major piece of formally presented, structured writing, in which ideas and findings are communicated in a reasoned and coherent manner, appropriate to the subject or subjects chosen. It is intended to promote high-level research and writing skills, intellectual discovery and creativity. An authentic learning experience, it provides students with an opportunity to engage in personal research on a topic of choice, under the guidance of a supervisor.

Approaches to learning and approaches to teaching

Approaches to learning and approaches to teaching across the Diploma Programme refers to deliberate strategies, skills and attitudes which permeate the learning and teaching environment. These approaches

and tools, intrinsically linked with the learner profile attributes, enhance student learning and assist student preparation for the Diploma Programme assessment and beyond. The aims of approaches to learning and approaches to teaching in the Diploma Programme are to:

- empower teachers as teachers of learners as well as teachers of content
- empower teachers to create clearer strategies for facilitating learning experiences in which students are more meaningfully engaged in structured inquiry and greater critical and creative thinking
- promote both the aims of individual subjects (making them more than course aspirations) and linking previously isolated knowledge (concurrency of learning)
- encourage students to develop an explicit variety of skills that will equip them to continue to be actively engaged in learning after they leave school, and to help them not only obtain university admission through better grades but also prepare for success during tertiary education and beyond
- enhance further the coherence and relevance of the students' Diploma Programme experience
- allow schools to identify the distinctive nature of an IB Diploma Programme education, with its blend of idealism and practicality.

The five approaches to learning (developing thinking skills, social skills, communication skills, self-management skills and research skills) along with the six approaches to teaching (teaching that is inquiry-based, conceptually focused, contextualized, collaborative, differentiated and informed by assessment) encompass the key values and principles that underpin IB pedagogy.

The IB learner profile and the IB mission statement

The Diploma Programme aims to develop in students the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to fulfil the aims of the IB, as expressed in the organization's mission statement and the learner profile. Teaching and learning in the Diploma Programme represent the reality in daily practice of the organization's educational philosophy.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity in the Diploma Programme is a set of values and behaviours informed by the attributes of the learner profile. In teaching, learning and assessment, academic integrity serves to promote personal integrity, engender respect for the integrity of others and their work, and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they acquire during their studies.

All coursework—including work submitted for assessment—is to be authentic, based on the student's individual and original ideas with the ideas and work of others fully acknowledged. Assessment tasks that require teachers to provide guidance to students or that require students to work collaboratively must be completed in full compliance with the detailed guidelines provided by the IB for the relevant subjects.

For further information on academic integrity in the IB and the Diploma Programme, please consult the IB publications *Academic integrity policy*, *Effective citing and referencing*, *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice* and the general regulations in *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures*. Specific information regarding academic integrity as it pertains to external and internal assessment components of this Diploma Programme subject can be found in this guide.

Learning diversity and learning support requirements

Schools must ensure that equal access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are provided to candidates with learning support requirements that are in line with the IB documents *Access and inclusion policy* and *Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes: Removing barriers to learning*.

The documents *Meeting student learning diversity in the classroom* and *The IB guide to inclusive education: a resource for whole school development* are available to support schools in the ongoing process of increasing access and engagement by removing barriers to learning.

Prior learning

The philosophy course at both SL and HL requires no previous formal experience in philosophy, nor is any particular background in terms of specific subjects studied for national or international qualifications expected or required. The specific skills required to succeed in this course are developed within the teaching of the course itself.

Philosophy may be offered explicitly as one of the disciplines within the individuals and societies subject group of the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). MYP individuals and societies is a concept-driven curriculum aimed at helping the learner construct meaning through improved critical thinking and the transfer of knowledge. Regardless of whether it is philosophy or another discipline from the subject group that is offered, the key concepts and skills developed through MYP individuals and societies provide a very useful foundation for students who go on to study the DP philosophy course.

Nature of the subject

Nature of philosophy

Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder.

(Plato 369 BCE/2014, p.37)

Philosophy is a systematic critical inquiry into stimulating and challenging questions such as: What does it mean to be human? What is meant when something is said to be right or wrong? What are the principles on which knowledge is constructed? What is the relationship between justice, freedom and equality? These questions arise out of everyday experiences and the practice of philosophy deepens and clarifies the understanding of these questions, as well as possible responses.

Studying philosophy encourages students to recognize that humans have been asking and answering these kinds of questions throughout history. It encourages them “to appreciate that this conversation across time and across cultures is important and—crucially—that they can and should join in. But they should do so with some humility and respect, building on what has been thought and said before.” (Gardner, 2018). It also develops highly transferable skills such as the ability to formulate arguments clearly, make reasoned judgements and evaluate highly complex and multifaceted issues.

The overarching emphasis of the DP philosophy course is on students “doing philosophy”, that is, on actively engaging students in philosophical activity. This means that a key focus of the course is on encouraging students to explore complex philosophical concepts and questions in a curious and critical way, articulating their own views on the issues they encounter and developing their own philosophical voice. Each area of the course provides students with an opportunity to explore a diverse range of different philosophical concepts, issues and arguments. Having the shared underlying focus on “doing philosophy” helps to give the course unity and coherence, providing a common approach that applies to all of the different elements of the course.

Throughout the course, students are also encouraged to apply their developing philosophical knowledge and skills to real-world situations and issues. This direct engagement in philosophical activity and its applications can be seen in the internal assessment exercise, where students explore how non-philosophical stimulus material can be treated in a philosophical way. For example, students can choose to explore a philosophical issue raised by a television show, painting, song lyric or even a personal experience, helping them to make connections between philosophy and the world around them. It can also be seen in the HL extension, where students consider some of the most pressing issues facing the world today and reflect on how philosophy, including the methods it makes use of as a discipline, can help to engage with and navigate these issues.

Another central feature of the DP philosophy course is that it requires students to explore both philosophical themes and philosophical texts. The in-depth study of a text from the list of prescribed texts is a central feature of the course, but teachers are also expected to use short extracts from other philosophical texts to support learning in all of the elements of the course. This is intended to engage students with a range of interesting and influential thinkers, and also to help deepen their appreciation of the diversity of traditions and approaches within philosophy.

Philosophy and international-mindedness

An education for international-mindedness; an education designed to break down the barriers of race, religion and class; an education that extolled the benefits of cultural diversity; above all else, an education for peace.

(Walker, 2011, p. 19)

The term international-mindedness is used by the IB to refer to a way of thinking, being and acting characterized by an openness to the world and a recognition of our deep interconnectedness to others.

The DP philosophy course places a great deal of emphasis on elements that are central to the development of international-mindedness. For example, it encourages students to be curious about, and to think deeply and carefully about, complicated issues such as censorship, the distribution of wealth, and environmental degradation and conservation. It encourages them to avoid shallow and polarized thinking and to avoid making quick judgements. Importantly, it highlights that sometimes there really are no simple answers: “that tensions between conflicting points of view have to be lived with, argued about and frequently left unresolved” (Walker, 2004, p. 135).

Dialogue and debate are encouraged in this course, which nurtures students’ capacity to interpret competing and contestable claims. Students are encouraged to discover and articulate their own views and ideas, to share their ideas with others, and to listen to and learn from what others think. Through this process, their own understanding is enriched and deepened as they become more engaged with different beliefs, values and experiences, as well as with alternative ways of answering questions.

The course also provides an opportunity to engage in an examination of concepts and debates of global significance. The flexibility of the DP philosophy course means that teachers have the opportunity to select relevant examples to explore in class, ensuring that the course appropriately meets their students’ needs and interests, whatever their location or cultural context.

In recent years, there has been a shift towards greater recognition of the global and diverse nature of philosophy as a discipline (Townley, 2010). This shift has seen critical reflection on the nature and boundaries of philosophy itself, as well as increasing recognition of previously marginalized or excluded perspectives within the discipline. The DP philosophy course encourages teachers and students to recognize, explore and draw upon the diversity and richness of different traditions and perspectives within philosophical thinking, and to reflect this diversity in the design and delivery of their course.

Suggestions to help teachers engage with a range of different philosophical traditions can be found within the suggested examples and discussion questions provided in this guide, as well as within the suggested supporting texts for each theme that can be found in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

Distinction between SL and HL

All SL and HL philosophy students follow a shared core syllabus that encourages the development of skills, attributes and attitudes as described in the “[Aims](#)” and “[Assessment objectives](#)” sections of this guide. The shared core syllabus involves the study of the core theme, one optional theme and one prescribed text, as well as the completion of the internal assessment exercise.

In addition, students at HL must study one further optional theme, exposing them to a greater breadth of philosophical concepts and issues, as well as the HL extension topic “Philosophy and contemporary issues”. This HL-only extension topic takes an in-depth look at some of the most pressing issues facing the world today and encourages students to reflect on how philosophy can help us to engage with and navigate these issues. By doing so, HL students consider the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy, and are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of doing philosophy in the course. The HL extension topic is assessed specifically in paper 3, taken by HL students only.

The difference in recommended teaching times for SL (150 hours) and HL (240 hours) signals a clear distinction between the demands made on students.

Aims

Individuals and societies group aims

Individuals and societies subjects help young people to develop a connection to our shared planet, exploring how to live sustainably and promoting the well-being of all people in the pursuit of a more peaceful world.

The aims of all the individuals and societies subjects are to equip young people to:

- explore and critically engage with multiple perspectives and ways of thinking
- investigate and evaluate the interactions between individuals and societies
- think and act as informed and principled individuals in societies
- understand and value the variety and diversity of the human experience across time and place.

Philosophy aims

The aims of the philosophy course are to engage students in philosophical activity, enabling them to:

- explore philosophical concepts and issues in an inquiring and intellectually curious way
- articulate their own views, ideas and arguments
- reflect critically on their own experiences and perspectives
- be open to and learn from the thinking of others
- appreciate the diversity of perspectives, traditions and approaches within philosophical thinking
- apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to the world around them.

Assessment objectives

By the end of the DP philosophy course, students will be expected to achieve the following assessment objectives.

Assessment objective 1. Knowledge and understanding

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Identify philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
- At **HL only**, demonstrate understanding of the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 2. Application and analysis

- Explain and analyse philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Construct and develop clear explanations, making use of relevant supporting examples.
- Analyse the philosophical issues present in both philosophical and non-philosophical stimuli.
- At **HL only**, analyse the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 3. Synthesis and evaluation

- Evaluate philosophical concepts, issues and arguments.
- Construct and develop balanced and focused arguments, making use of relevant supporting evidence.
- Discuss different points of view and come to reasoned conclusions.
- At **HL only**, evaluate the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity.

Assessment objective 4. Use and application of appropriate skills

- Produce clear and well-structured written responses.
- Demonstrate appropriate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary.
- In the internal assessment task, demonstrate evidence of research skills, organization and referencing.

Syllabus outline

Syllabus component	Teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Core theme: Being human The core theme “Being human” is compulsory for all students.	45	45
Optional themes SL students are required to study one theme from the following list. HL students are required to study two themes from the following list. 1. Aesthetics 2. Epistemology 3. Ethics 4. Philosophy of religion 5. Philosophy of science 6. Political philosophy 7. Social philosophy	45	90
Prescribed text Students are required to study one text from the “IB list of prescribed philosophical texts”. (This list is provided later in this subject guide.)	40	40
HL extension The HL extension topic “Philosophy and contemporary issues” is compulsory for all HL students.	–	45
Internal assessment: Philosophical analysis SL and HL students are required to write a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.	20	20
Total teaching hours	150	240

The recommended teaching time is 150 hours to complete SL courses and 240 hours to complete HL courses as stated in the general regulations (in [Diploma Programme Assessment procedures](#)).

Syllabus content

Core theme: Being human

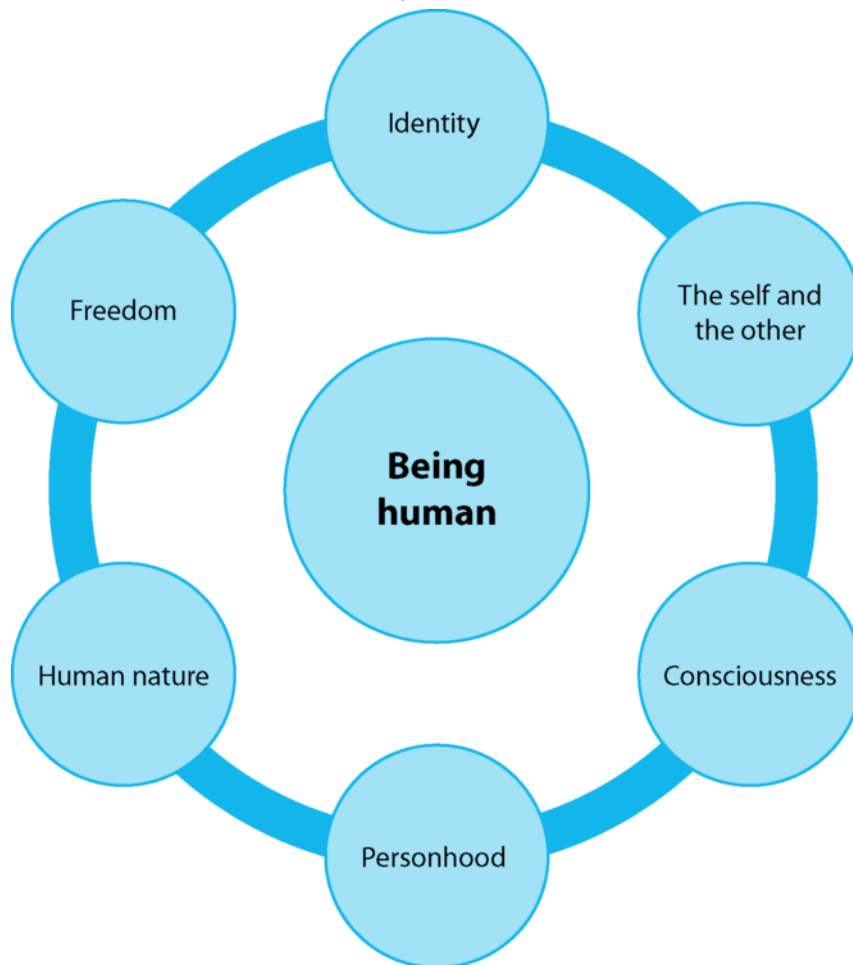
The core theme explores the fundamental question of what it is to be human. It is focused on the exploration of key concepts such as identity, freedom and human nature, and on consideration of questions such as what sets humans apart from other species and where the boundaries of being human lie. One of the reasons we study philosophy is to search for a better understanding of ourselves, both as individuals and as members of societies, and this search is at the heart of this element of the course.

The exploration of this theme generates a wide range of potential discussion questions, such as the following.

- What does it mean to be human?
- What do we mean by consciousness and how does it relate to non-conscious aspects of reality?
- Is there such a thing as the self?
- Is how we interact with others what makes us human?
- What do recent discoveries in neuroscience reveal about what it is to be human?

The core theme is compulsory for all students. It consists of an exploration of six closely interrelated key concepts, represented in the following figure 2.

Figure 2
The six interrelated key concepts of the core theme



The exploration of these six key concepts is mandatory. However, teachers have a great deal of flexibility as to how they choose to explore these concepts and it is intended that the concepts are seen as closely interconnected and overlapping. Teachers are encouraged to utilize the flexibility of this theme in order to explore topics, issues and examples that are of particular interest to their students—for example, the relationship between gender and identity, or topical news stories on advances in artificial intelligence.

The core theme has also been deliberately designed to lend itself to exploration using examples drawn from a wide range of philosophical approaches and traditions. For example:

- the core theme could provide an opportunity to explore ideas and short extracts from classical texts such as Aristotle's *De Anima* (1987) combined with later philosophers, such as Ibn Rashd, who were themselves heavily influenced by Aristotle's writings
- teachers could use the core theme as a way to introduce students to ideas from 20th century philosophical movements such as phenomenology (e.g. Merleau-Ponty's *The Structure of Behaviour*, 1983) or existentialism (e.g. Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 2007)
- discussions of the concept of the self could provide rich opportunities to explore the thinking of philosophers such as Vasubandhu, one of the most significant writers within Indian Buddhist philosophy, who denies the view that the self has independent reality, or the work of contemporary philosophers such as Ganeri (2012) who draws on a variety of different philosophical traditions in his writings.

The following table provides suggested topics that can be used to explore each of the six key concepts, as well as ideas for discussion questions and examples arising from each concept. Please note that these are suggestions only and should not be taken as prescriptive. The examples can be used or substituted for others according to the specific interests and needs of the teacher and students.

Key concept	Suggested topics of study	Suggested examples and discussion questions
Identity	Personal identity Identity over time Cultural identity	- Who am I? - What sort of metaphysical things are we? - What makes me the same person I was 10 years ago? - Psychological continuity, memory and identity (e.g. John Locke, Vasubandhu) - Are we independent beings or is each of us a part or state of something else? - What matters in identity? - Can beliefs be part of our identity even if they are false? - To what extent does culture shape identity?
The self and the other	Self and non-self Solipsism and intersubjectivity Relations to others	- Is there such a thing as the self? - Can we really know ourselves? Can we really know the other? - Is how we define “the other” part of how we define “the self”? - The Buddhist notion of <i>anattā</i> or “not-self” - Simone De Beauvoir’s rejection of the concept of a solipsistic isolated self - Biological, social, psychological and spiritual relations of the self to others - The relational self (e.g. Confucius) - Ideas of immersion, participation and coordination as being constitutive of self (e.g. Jonardon Ganeri)
Consciousness	Consciousness, the self and the world The mind–body problem The problem of other minds	- What is consciousness? - What do recent advances in neuroscience tell us about how the human mind works? - Are we composed of mind and body? - What, if any, are the relationships between mind and body? - Why do we believe that other people have minds like ours? - Transcendental ego (e.g. Immanuel Kant) - Neuroscientific perspectives (e.g. Patricia Churchland, eliminative materialism)
Personhood	Self-consciousness Agency Moral responsibility	- What is it to be a person? - The idea of personhood as a matter of degrees (e.g. Kwasi Wiredu) - Could animals or machines be considered persons?

Key concept	Suggested topics of study	Suggested examples and discussion questions
		- What are the implications of classifying an entity as a person? - Personhood as a mystery and a starting point for our understanding of the concept of transcendence - Are we self-conscious beings? - Is being morally responsible the defining feature of being human? - If moral agency is a necessary feature of personhood, does this mean that infants are not persons?
Human nature	Individuality and universality The nature versus nurture debate Emotion and reason	- Do humans have common characteristics that are independent of the influence of culture? - The view that there is no such thing as human nature - How fixed/malleable is human nature? - Behaviourism (e.g. B.F. Skinner) - The tabula rasa/"blank slate" (e.g. John Locke) - Human nature as finite and flawed versus human nature as perfectible - The contrasting roles of reason (e.g. René Descartes and David Hume) - Is reason a special characteristic that distinguishes humans from machines or other animals?
Freedom	Freedom and determinism Social conditioning Existential angst and authenticity	- Is there such a thing as free will? - Are freedom and determinism compatible? - Compatibilism (e.g. Daniel Dennett) and incompatibilism (e.g. Peter Van Inwagen) - Is autonomy necessary for personhood? - What is the difference between socialization and social conditioning? - Why did existentialists see freedom as the source of existential angst? - Is it possible to live authentically? - Does our freedom depend on the freedom of others?

Links to TOK

Exploration of the question of what it means to be human creates rich opportunities to make links to the TOK course. For example, discussions of the concepts of self and other could link effectively to discussions of perspectives in TOK. Similarly, discussions of the roles of reason and emotion within an exploration of the concept of human nature could link well to TOK discussions about the cognitive tools that we have available to us as knowers.

Optional themes

The purpose of the optional themes is to provide students with an opportunity to explore specific areas of philosophy in depth.

The optional themes are as follows.

1. Aesthetics
2. Epistemology
3. Ethics
4. Philosophy of religion
5. Philosophy of science
6. Political philosophy
7. Social philosophy

SL students must study **one** optional theme from this list. HL students must study **two** optional themes from this list.

This section of the guide provides an introduction to each optional theme, along with suggestions for making links to TOK. For each optional theme there is a table outlining the three topics for study, the prescribed content for each of these topics, as well as suggestions for interesting examples and discussion questions. These suggestions are intended as indicators of the kinds of examples and discussion questions that teachers may choose to explore. They are suggestions only and should not be taken as prescriptive.

When selecting which optional themes to explore with students, teachers are encouraged to consider carefully the overall balance and breadth of their course design, as well as practical issues such as availability of supporting resources and texts. More guidance on course design and on each of the optional themes can be found in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

Optional theme 1: Aesthetics

Aesthetics is an area of philosophy that explores the nature of art, concepts such as beauty and taste, aesthetic experience and judgement, and the relationship between art and society. This theme is intended to cover art in all its different forms—for example, dance, music, painting, sculpture, literature, photography, film and drama. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- What is art?
- What is an artist?
- Do all works of art arise from the same artistic impulse?
- Should art have any religious, moral or political message?
- Why should we be concerned with works of art when they might not seem to have utility?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic explores the nature of art, something Richard Wollheim describes as “one of the most elusive of the traditional problems of human culture” (1980, p. 1). It includes exploration of issues ranging from the very nature of a work of art to the relationship between art and creativity. It also includes consideration of the significance of contexts and environments; for example, the view that art is a social construct dependent on a variety of contexts: historical, cultural, political and economic.

The second topic focuses on the artist and the artistic process. It includes discussion of how artists create, imagine and perform, and encourages reflection on assumptions and stereotypes around who is seen as an artist. This topic also includes exploration of the artistic process, including the impact of technology on the creation and appreciation of art. It also provides opportunities for exploration of issues relating to the artist and society, such as obedience to rules, social conformity and censorship.

The third topic focuses on aesthetic experience and judgement. This includes discussion of issues relating to the recognition, appreciation and criticism of works of art, as well as an exploration of the concepts of beauty and taste. It provides an opportunity to critique positions such as Kant’s claim that an aesthetic experience of beauty is something that all people should agree on if the object is indeed beautiful (Kant, 1790/2008), or Abhinavagupta’s concept of *sahrdaya* (the sensitive spectator).

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
The nature of art	The nature of art Creativity Art and its physical, social and cultural context	• What is art? • Can we identify works of art outside what a given society calls art? • Art as a means to an end versus art as an end in itself • Is art always the product of human activity? • Art as imitation, transformation, creation or expression (e.g. Plato) • The idea of the muse • Art as a means of communication, education, propaganda or indoctrination • Is art independent of any moral or political purpose? • The presentation of works of art in classical museum contexts
The artist and the artistic process	The artist The artistic process (including the impact of technology) The artist and society (including accountability, conformity and censorship)	• Is there a difference between an artist and a craftsperson? • Is the notion of "the artist" a Western construct? • The artist as a reflector of existing values or as an agent of change • "Outsider art" • Are we all born artists? • The artistic process around the world: function, form and content • The impact of various technologies on the production and concept of art (e.g. digital art) • Creative licence • Rules, social conformity, censorship • Accountability: to oneself, to a cause, to moral, political or social ends
Aesthetic experience and judgement	Aesthetic experience Aesthetic judgement Beauty and taste	• Aesthetic experience: pleasure, disgust, perfection, the sublime, spontaneity, provocation • Natural sources of aesthetic experience • The role of the audience/spectator • Can something be art if no one ever sees it? • The concept of the "beholder's share" (e.g. Ernst Gombrich) • How people use, enjoy and criticize art • Aesthetic judgement and the senses, emotions, values • How do we define what is beautiful and what is ugly? • Discussions of taste (e.g. in David Hume) • The relationship between education and taste • To what extent are aesthetic judgements culturally conditioned?

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
		• “Great works of art”, artefacts, crafts, pop art, and reproductions • Classifications of forms and branches of art

Links to TOK

This theme has the potential for rich links to TOK, in particular to discussions of the arts as an area of knowledge. Discussions could explore TOK questions such as how the subjective viewpoint of an individual can contribute to knowledge in the arts, or whether the arts have a social function as a medium for social criticism. Another link to TOK could be the question of classification—how we classify art into different branches and forms, and how and whether these classifications can be justified.

Optional theme 2: Epistemology

Epistemology is the area of philosophy concerned with the study of the nature, origin, scope and limits of human knowledge. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- Can I know anything at all?
- What is the relationship between knowledge and certainty?
- Is knowledge culturally dependent?
- How important is the continuous development of knowledge for the advancement of humanity?
- What are the sources of knowledge?
- What are the limits of knowledge?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic focuses on the nature of knowledge. It explores the conditions needed for something to constitute knowledge and questions such as what it means to say that we know something. It also includes discussion of the concept of truth, which could, for example, provide an opportunity to contrast the understanding of truth as a way of life and self-realization found in Lao Tzu with the Western understanding of truth as a relation between language and reality.

The second topic focuses on limits and problems of knowledge. In addition to introducing many classical debates in epistemology, this topic also provides an opportunity to study more recent approaches such as reliabilism and contextualism.

The third topic examines the application of knowledge in society, bringing up questions about access to knowledge, and the relationship between knowledge, control and power. This provides an opportunity for reflection on the ways in which knowers know what they know and how particular approaches have often been devalued, and the power dynamics behind epistemic practices and norms. It also explores the connection between knowledge and technology, both in terms of the impact of technology on what we know and also how we know.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Nature of knowledge	Nature of knowledge Truth Sources of knowledge	• How do we experience the world around us? • Rationalism and empiricism • <i>Pratibha</i>/knowing what (e.g. Bhartrhari) versus knowing that and knowing how • Truth: coherence, correspondence and pragmatism • What role does truth play in constituting knowledge?

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
		- Sources of knowledge (e.g. perception, reason, testimony) - Inductive and deductive reasoning - Self-knowledge
Problems of knowledge	Scepticism Theories of perception Theories of justification	- Can we know anything at all? - What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? - Does knowledge require certainty? - Issues with knowledge as justified true belief (e.g. the Gettier problem, the regress problem) - Realism, scepticism and arguments from illusion - Subjectivism and objectivism - Idealism, phenomenism, perspectivism - What do we mean by justification? - How do we assess whether a belief is justified or unjustified? - Internal and external justification - Theories of justification (e.g. foundationalism and coherentism)
Application of knowledge	Knowledge and power Access to knowledge Knowledge and technology	- The relationship between knowledge, control and power - Who should control knowledge and how should it be disseminated? - Knowledge and power (e.g. Plato, Paulo Freire) - Access to knowledge and censorship - Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Why are certain ways of knowing, such as knowing through meditation or introspection, often dismissed by Western philosophical traditions? - Technology as a means of disseminating knowledge - Does technology tend to exacerbate or mitigate against inequalities in access to knowledge?

Links to TOK

This theme has obvious links to TOK, although care should be taken to ensure that the TOK course does not turn into an epistemology course where the primary focus is a philosophical investigation of the nature of knowledge. Useful links to TOK could focus on questions of how we gain knowledge of the external world, what we mean by terms such as justification, or issues around power and access to knowledge.

Optional theme 3: Ethics

Ethics is an area of philosophy that explores the possible grounds for making moral decisions and that examines concepts such as values, responsibility and virtue. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- How do we decide if a particular action is right or wrong?
- How should we treat people?
- Are moral decisions culturally influenced?
- Are there fundamental moral principles that apply in all situations?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic focuses on normative ethics, exploring moral theories and how we make ethical decisions. This topic is open to exploration from a variety of perspectives. For example, discussions of the concept of duty could contrast the Kantian approach to duty with the Buddhist concept of dharma, while discussions of virtue could compare ancient Greek virtue theorists such as Aristotle with the emphasis on virtue and character found in Buddhist texts such as the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

The second topic focuses on meta-ethics; on the origins and nature of moral values and foundations for moral judgement. This includes exploration of questions such as whether moral values are universal or relative, or, for example, whether breaking a promise is always wrong. This topic also explores debates surrounding ethical language, including the significance of calling something right or wrong.

The third topic focuses on applied ethics and explores ethical approaches to a selection of real-world issues. Specifically, this topic requires teachers and students to explore three key areas of applied ethics: biomedical ethics, business ethics, and the distribution of wealth. For example, discussions of the distribution of wealth could explore issues such as our ethical obligations to distant strangers or those raised in Singer's short essay *Famine, Affluence and Morality* (1971).

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Normative ethics	Moral principles Virtue/character-based theories Deontological versus teleological theories	• Is ethics more about self-interest or about the interests of others? • Are some virtues more important than others? • Doing the "right thing" and doing the "best thing" • Virtue-based theories (e.g. Aristotle, Alasdair MacIntyre, Elizabeth Anscombe) • Deontological theories (e.g. Kantian ethics, divine command theory, modern deontologists—Frances Kamm) • Teleological theories (e.g. rule utilitarianism, act utilitarianism, Mohist/state consequentialism) • The greatest good for the greatest number • Duty, dharma
Meta-ethics	The origins and nature of moral values Foundations for moral judgements Ethical language	• What are moral values? • How do people come by their moral values? • Are moral values anything more than individual or group preferences? • Do moral principles exist? Are they universal or relative to a particular situation or culture? • Is moral sense natural or cultural? Relative or universal? Subjective or objective? • What is the significance of calling something right or wrong? • Is moral behaviour found only in human beings? • Foundations for moral judgements: rationality, emotion, natural law, environment

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
		- Cognitivism and non-cognitivism, naturalism and non-naturalism, intuitionism and emotivism - The debate about the meaning of the word “good” in moral statements
Applied ethics	The following three areas of applied ethics must be studied. - Biomedical ethics - Business ethics - Distribution of wealth	- Biomedical ethics (e.g. cloning, genetic engineering, stem cell research, euthanasia, abortion) - Business ethics (e.g. norms and values, fair trade, business espionage, child labour) - Distribution of wealth—ethical responsibilities to humanity (e.g. poverty, inequality, taxation, charity)

Links to TOK

This theme links clearly to explorations of ethics in TOK, although it should be noted that in TOK there is a narrower focus specifically on ethics as it relates to knowledge. Ethics is one of the four headings of the knowledge framework that runs across all of the different themes and areas of knowledge in TOK. One source of interesting links to TOK could be discussions of the role of cognitive tools such as emotion, intuition and reason in ethical decision-making. There is also potential for interesting discussions of language in ethics, and in particular the nature of non-literal language, such as ethical language.

Optional theme 4: Philosophy of religion

Philosophy of religion explores key concepts and issues related to religion, raising fundamental questions about the nature of human existence and experience. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- Can God be defined?
- Can we prove the existence of a higher being through reasoning or experience?
- What is the nature and scope of religious language?
- Is spirituality possible without religion or belief in a higher being?
- Could religion be seen as a purely social phenomenon?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic focuses on exploring the nature and existence of God, allowing for discussion of different beliefs about God and different versions of theism, such as monotheism and polytheism. It also looks at some of the attributes ascribed to God in different traditions, such as the traditional Judeo-Christian conception of God as omniscient and omnipotent. This topic also focuses on the question of whether we have reason to think that God does or does not exist, exploring some of the main arguments for and against the existence of God.

The second topic examines religious language and whether it is possible to talk about the infinite and divine in language used to talk about the finite and the human. This could include, for example, discussion of the way that religious language is used symbolically and metaphorically in the Sikh text *Guru Granth Sahib*, or the suggestion that God can only be talked about in terms of what he is not by exploring Maimonides’s writing on the Via Negativa in *The Guide for the Perplexed* (1995).

The third topic explores different types of religious experience and behaviour such as meditation, prayer and near-death experiences. It also examines controversies over claims to have experienced the divine, providing the potential for interesting links to psychology and neuroscience.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Nature and existence of God	Nature of God Arguments for the existence of God Arguments against the existence of God	• What does the word “God” mean? • Can God be defined? • Nature of God: types of theism (e.g. monotheistic views, polytheistic views, pantheistic views) • Characteristics and attributes of God (e.g. omniscience, omnipotence, timelessness, benevolence) • Can religious claims be rationally justified? • What role does religious tradition/practice play in determining our view on whether human reason is capable of answering questions about the existence of God? • Arguments for the existence of God (e.g. ontological argument, cosmological argument/Kalam cosmological argument, teleological argument, karma as proof of God in Nyaya Hindu thought) • Arguments against the existence of God (e.g. argument from the existence of evil, the omnipotence paradox, argument from inconsistent revelations)
Religious language	Nature of religious language The problem of religious language Attempted solutions to the problem of religious language	• Nature of religious language: symbolic, metaphorical, mythological, etc. • Religious language as analogous (e.g. Thomas Aquinas) • Can religious statements ever be shown to be true or false? • Is religious language meaningful? • Religious statements as verifiable after death (e.g. John Hick) • Problem of religious language: use of ordinary human language to talk about the divine (e.g. William Alston) • Can the language of finite beings be used to talk about an infinite being? • Religious statements as meaningless if they cannot be verified (e.g. Alfred Jules Ayer and verificationism) • Religion as a legitimate language game (e.g. Ludwig Wittgenstein)
Religious experience and behaviour	Definitions/characteristics of religious experience The value of religious experience Religion in a multicultural environment	• Is religious experience a possible source of knowledge about the existence and nature of God? • Types of religious experience—mysticism (e.g. Sufism, near-death experiences, prayer) • Characteristics of religious experience (e.g. ineffability, transcendence, personal)

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
		- Is it possible to understand religious experience without having had a religious experience? - Faith and motivation for belief - Social conformity versus personal commitment - The pragmatic view of faith: indoctrination, illusion, projection - Links to psychology and neuroscience - Religion and multiculturalism—religious pluralism (e.g. John Hick and the concept of “the real”)

Links to TOK

This optional theme has particularly strong links to the “knowledge and religion” optional theme in the TOK course. For example, there are rich links to questions about whether it is possible to know God, whether it is possible to use human language to describe the divine, or how we decide between the competing claims of different religions.

Optional theme 5: Philosophy of science

Philosophy of science focuses on exploring the assumptions, methods and implications of science. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- What differentiates science from pseudo-science or non-science?
- Does science aim at truth?
- What is the central feature of science?
- Are all elements of the universe, including human action, ultimately determined?
- Should scientists be held morally responsible for the uses of their inventions?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic focuses on exploring the nature and methodologies of science. It includes a study of the differences between science and non-science, something Karl Popper identified as the central question for philosophy of science (1934/2002). It also provides an opportunity to consider more sceptical perspectives—for example, Paul Feyerabend’s claim that no description of the scientific method could be broad enough to encompass all the approaches and methods used by scientists, and that imposing prescriptive scientific method would stifle creativity (1975).

The second topic focuses on science and the self, allowing for exploration of some of the more metaphysical elements of the philosophy of science around causation and determinism, as well as providing rich opportunities to make connections to the core theme.

The third topic focuses on the relationship between science and society, considering both the impact of society on science and the impact of science on society. It includes discussion of issues such as whether objectivity is an unrealistic and unachievable ideal for science, or what the moral responsibilities of scientists might be.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Nature and methodologies of science	The nature of science (aims, assumptions, foundations and development of science) Demarcation (science, pseudo-science and non-science)	- Does science aim at truth? Scientific realism and anti-realism - What is the central feature of science? - Positivist and post-positivist philosophers (e.g. Paul Feyerabend)

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
	Methodologies of science (induction, unification and reduction)	• The role of observation, experiment and measurement in science • How does science develop? Progress of science (e.g. Thomas Kuhn) • Methodology, theory-formation and inductive and deductive reasoning • Nature of theories and hypotheses, explanation, deductive-nomological method of explanation • Are there some questions science will never be able to answer? • Can theories within a single scientific discipline be unified? • Can the different scientific disciplines be unified into a single overarching theory?
Science and the self	Cognitive science and the concept of the self Explanations of the self (biological and biochemical explanations; teleological and reductive explanations) Causality and determinism	• Is it possible to reduce all life processes to biochemical reactions? • The minimal self and the narrative self • Relationship between philosophy of mind and cognitive science • Neuroscience and the brain • Consciousness • Biosemiotics/biocommunicative approach • Causality, determinism, and the nature of physical laws
Science and society	Science and values: impartiality, neutrality, autonomy and accountability The effects of society and social values on science Implications of science: the impact of science on society	• How independent is science from its social context? • Social accountability; responsibility and ethical conduct in research • Funding for scientific research • Scientific openness • Military research • Ownership of genetic information • Post-Second World War "big science" (e.g. Human Genome Project, Large Hadron Collider) • Does science require commitment to certain values? • How do social values contribute to or undermine the objectivity of science? • Constitutive values versus contextual values (e.g. Helen Longino) • Do scientists have particular moral responsibilities to society?

Links to TOK

There is a great deal of scope for links between this optional theme and discussions of the natural sciences as an area of knowledge in TOK. Students could, for example, consider the relationship between different disciplines within the natural sciences, or explore questions concerning the effect that male dominance of the scientific profession has had on scientific knowledge and practice. Discussion of the role of observation in the sciences could also link to TOK discussions of whether observation involves both perception and cognition, or to debates about the objectivity of observations.

Optional theme 6: Political philosophy

Political philosophy is an area of philosophy that focuses on the study of people in societies, the claims people have on each other in the form of rights and obligations, and their demands for justice, equality and liberty. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- Under which conditions can political obligation arise and what is its extent?
- Are freedom and equality compatible?
- Can justice be an ideal as well as a process?
- How are laws justified and are there aspects of human life that laws should not attempt to regulate?
- Are human rights inalienable and universal?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic deals with civil society, the state and government. It focuses on concepts such as sovereignty, authority and power, as well as different forms of government.

The second topic focuses on justice, including social justice, the relationship between justice and fairness, and the distinction between retributive and distributive justice. It also includes discussion of the concepts of justice, freedom and equality, and the interrelationships between these three central concepts.

The third topic focuses specifically on liberty and rights. This includes the distinction between human rights and legal rights, and the relationship between rights, duties and responsibilities. This could provide an opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives by encouraging reflection on questions such as whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a Western bias. This theme also includes exploration of the concepts of positive and negative liberty, as well as issues around censorship and freedom of information.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
The state	The state (and its origins) Forms of government Civil society	• Distinctions between state, nation, government and civil society • Social-contract theories of state of nature • Concept of <i>asabiyya</i> (solidarity) (e.g. in Ibn Khaldun's <i>The Muqaddimah</i>) • Analogy of state as family/clan • Revolution, anarchism • What obligations does the state have to the individual and the individual have to the state? • Authority, sovereignty, power and corruption • Forms of government: one-party democracy, multi-party democracy, oligarchy, monarchy, authoritarian and totalitarian rule, tribalism, theocracy • What makes a government legitimate? • Ideologies of government: liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, socialism
Justice	Social justice	• Is justice an idea, an ideal or a process?

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
	Distributive justice, retributive justice and punishment Interrelationships between justice, freedom and equality	- Why did Friedrich Hayek describe social justice as “an empty phrase without determinable content”? - The distinction between distributive and retributive justice: the right or will of the strong; substantive versus procedural justice - Gender politics - Relations to fairness (e.g. John Rawls) - Is there an objective standard for justice? - What is the precise relationship between justice, freedom and equality? - What role does/should equality play in theories of justice? - Is strict equality impossible?
Liberty and rights	Rights, duties and responsibilities (including human, non-human, legal and natural rights) Positive and negative liberty Censorship and freedom of information	- Are human rights inalienable and universal? - Do non-human animals have rights? Do non-living things have rights? (e.g. Arne Naess) - What is the relationship between legal rights and other rights such as moral rights? - What rights should legal systems recognize? - Conflicts of rights; denials of rights - Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities - Are there areas of human life that laws should not attempt to regulate? - Harm, offence and free speech (e.g. John Stuart Mill)

Links to TOK

There are many opportunities to make interesting links between this optional theme and TOK, particularly in the “knowledge and politics” optional theme and the human sciences area of knowledge. For example, discussions of whether there is an objective standard for justice could link well to wider TOK discussions about subjectivity and objectivity.

Optional theme 7: Social philosophy

This theme focuses on the philosophical study of human society, the interactions and interrelationships between individuals and groups, social structures and institutions, and social behaviour. This theme provides an opportunity for students to explore questions such as the following.

- How should we live together in a society?
- What categories are created by the ways that we organize society?
- What are the distinct features of family as a social institution?
- Are there traditional social institutions that can now be/have been dispensed with?
- How have concepts of race been shaped by racism?
- Are the constructs of masculinity and femininity inherently oppressive?

This theme is divided into three topics. The first topic focuses on social structures and institutions. It explores how structures and institutions both shape us and are shaped by us. It includes discussion of social

institutions including family, marriage and education. Social philosophy focuses on studying society from a philosophical point of view. It is therefore important that in this topic, and throughout this theme, students explore the questions that arise in an explicitly philosophical, rather than sociological or anthropological, way.

The second topic focuses on the concepts of equality and discrimination. It explores the implications of the creation of categories and groups through the ways that we organize society, with a particular focus on the treatment of minority and marginalized groups in society. This provides an opportunity to, for example, explore questions about race in contemporary society and the role of social structures and institutions in the perpetuation of racial injustices—such as that explored in *The Racial Contract* (Mills, 1997). It also includes an opportunity for discussions of tolerance; for example, raising questions about whether tolerance of different groups in society is the same as seeing everyone as equal.

The third topic provides an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of social issues related to gender. While issues related to gender are an important part of all of the elements of the course, this topic is intended to provide an opportunity for a more in-depth dedicated study of the social dimensions of these issues. For example, this topic explores questions related to the nature of gender and whether gender is socially constructed.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Social structures and institutions	Formal and informal social structures Nature, structure and function of social institutions Family, marriage and education as social institutions	- Formal social structures such as marriage - Informal social structures such as friendships - Is there a difference between community and society? - How should we organize society? - Individualism: separation of individual persons from society - Humans as social animals (e.g. Aristotle) - Why is family often considered the primary social institution? - Changes and challenges to traditional social institutions - In what sense, if any, are institutions agents?
Equality and discrimination	Treatment of minority and marginalized groups in society (including structural violence) Tolerance Social discontent and social change	- Groups marginalized on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, language or ethnicity - Treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, minority nations, indigenous people - What influence do categories of race and gender have on human behaviour? - What can human beings expect from their involvement in society? - Is tolerance enough or does it fall short of treating minority groups as equal citizens? - How is racial inequality structured and perpetuated? - How should we understand the relationship between different forms of social oppression? - Social discontent: civil disobedience and protest - How social discontent contributes to social change and the transformation of social institutions

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Gender	Nature of gender; sex and gender Gender and identity; the impact of gender differences on human self-understanding Gender politics; gender roles; constructs of femininity and masculinity	• What is the nature of gender and gender categories? • The distinction between sex and gender • The claim that “one is not born but rather becomes woman” (Simone De Beauvoir) • Is there an essence to gender? • What is the relationship between gender, sex, sexual orientation and identity? • Is gender socially constructed? • Gender and social conditioning • Role identification and role distribution • Why do some thinkers associate the concepts of yin and yang with male and female? • Misogyny and objectification • How does sexism intersect with other forms of social oppression?

Links to TOK

This theme links particularly well to TOK discussions of the concepts of culture and perspectives. There is scope, for example, to explore whether it is possible to have knowledge of a culture or a society in which we have not been raised, and whether there exists a neutral position from which we can make judgements about competing claims from groups with different traditions and different interests. Discussions of marginalized groups in society can link well to discussions about the dominance of particular paradigms or cultures, and the marginalization of particular perspectives.

Prescribed text

This element of the course provides an opportunity for students to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of a philosophical text. This is a challenging but rewarding part of the course, providing an opportunity for the student to engage with and be inspired by a text from an influential philosopher.

Students at both SL and HL are required to study **one** text from the following “IB list of prescribed philosophical texts”. Teachers should select only one text from the list below to study in full with their students.

The text selected from the list should be studied in its entirety, except in the case of Plato and De Beauvoir where the lengths of the texts concerned means that particular sections have been specified for study. The study of the text must be from the text itself, not from a commentary on the text, and the study must take place in class with the support and direction of the teacher.

Please note, while this element of the course requires the in-depth study of just one text, teachers are also encouraged to use short extracts from a variety of other philosophical texts to support their teaching of the other elements of the course. More guidance on the effective use of extracts from philosophical texts throughout the rest of the course can be found in “[Using philosophical texts](#)” section in this subject guide and also in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

IB list of prescribed philosophical texts

Alfred Jules Ayer	<i>Language, Truth and Logic</i>
Simone de Beauvoir	<i>The Second Sex</i> , Volume 1 part 1, Volume 2 part 1 and Volume 2 part 4

Confucius	<i>The Analects</i>
René Descartes	<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
Frantz Fanon	<i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>
John Stuart Mill	<i>On Liberty</i>
Friedrich Nietzsche	<i>The Genealogy of Morals</i>
Martha C. Nussbaum	<i>Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach</i>
José Ortega y Gasset	<i>The Revolt of the Masses</i>
Plato	<i>The Republic, Books IV–IX</i>
Charles Taylor	<i>The Ethics of Authenticity</i>
Lao Tzu	<i>Tao Te Ching</i>

When planning teaching and learning activities for this element of the course, it is important for teachers to note that the prescribed text is assessed via an open-book examination (see the detailed description of paper 2 in the “[External assessment](#)” section). Teachers must carefully consider how to approach the teaching and learning of the prescribed text in ways that support and are informed by the open-book format of the examination.

Students are permitted to take a copy of the selected prescribed text into the examination with them. This text must be a clean copy—it must **not** be annotated. This means that students cannot write notes in the text, but also that they cannot add any other annotations such as underlining or highlighting. It is very important that teachers and students are aware of these restrictions when undertaking their study of the selected prescribed text.

For example, before beginning the study of the text, it is important to decide on the format(s) in which students can make notes and comments to aid their understanding. A variety of approaches could be adopted, for example:

- students have their own copies of the selected prescribed text that they can annotate during their study of the text, and then the school has a set of clean copies of the text that they provide to students for use in the examination
- students have a single copy of the text that they use for both in-class study and the examination, in which case throughout their study of the text students must be required to keep this as a clean copy and to make any notes and annotations in a separate document/resource.

Further guidance on approaching the teaching of a prescribed text and preparing effectively for an open-book examination can be found in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

HL extension: Philosophy and contemporary issues

The HL extension is an opportunity for students to engage with some of the most urgent issues facing humanity in the 21st century and to consider how philosophy can help us to engage with and navigate them.

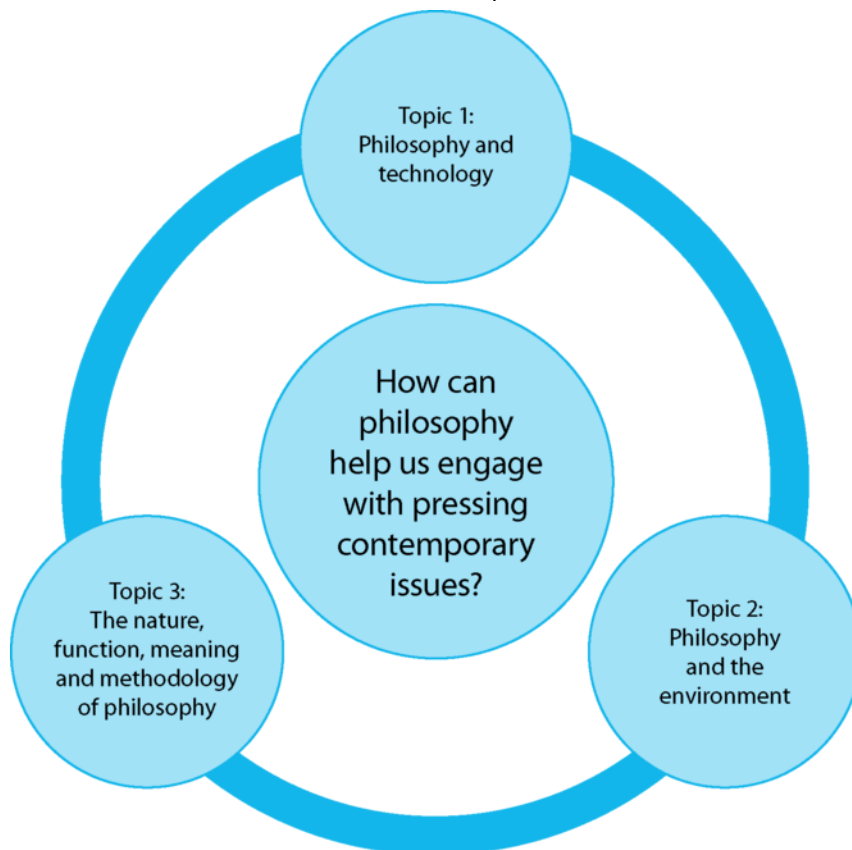
This element of the course focuses on an exploration of two contemporary issues—technology and the environment. It also presents an opportunity for reflection as to the features of philosophy that impact its usefulness in helping us to engage with these kinds of subjects.

Through the exploration of issues arising from technology and the environment, students consider how philosophy can help us to engage with these kinds of issues, as well as considering the potential limitations of philosophy in this respect. Students then have an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy itself. For example, students consider how the methods that philosophers use impact on the usefulness of philosophy to help us to navigate these important and complex issues.

Technology and the environment have been selected as the focus for the HL extension because they are particularly rich sources of pressing contemporary issues facing the world. It also extends very naturally from the study of the core theme. Focusing on these topics also ensures that reflections and discussions on the nature and usefulness of philosophy do not take place at an overly abstract or generalized level, but instead are contextualized within discussions of specific issues and ideas.

The HL extension consists of three topics (figure 3), all of which must be studied.

Figure 3
HL extension topics



The first topic focuses on technology and on how philosophy can help us to navigate the complex issues related to technology that we face in the world today. It explores the nature and role of technology, as well as the impact of technology on individuals and societies. This topic provides an opportunity to consider how a diverse range of philosophers have viewed technology, from *techne* in Aristotle to "organ projection" in Ernst Kapp (1877/2018) to contemporary philosophers such as Luciano Floridi (2014), and the insights that these perspectives can bring to contemporary debates. It also provides an opportunity to look more closely at challenges arising from current developments in areas such as robotics and biotechnology.

The second topic focuses on the environment and on how philosophy can help us to engage with important environmental issues. It explores issues relating to interactions and interdependence between individuals, societies and their environments. It includes discussion of environmental challenges and how we should respond to them, as well as debates such as whether nature has intrinsic value, extrinsic value or both. An example of a text that could provide interesting extracts to support the exploration of this topic is *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2003). In this text, Nasr discusses the relationship between humans and nature in a number of different traditions such as Taoism, Buddhism and Islam, connecting the ecological crisis facing the world to a wider spiritual crisis facing humanity.

The third topic encourages explicit deeper exploration of and reflection on the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy, and of how these features of philosophy impact its usefulness in helping us to navigate urgent issues. It allows students to deepen their understanding of philosophy as an activity by providing a space in the course for critical examination of philosophy itself. For example, students could compare views of philosophy that focus on the centrality of abstract thinking and argumentation with the association of philosophy with practice (*sadhana*) found in much of Indian philosophy.

The HL extension is an opportunity for students to reflect on their own experience of “doing philosophy”. To support this reflective focus, a useful way to introduce discussions of the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy can be to ask students to reflect on their own experiences of philosophical activity throughout all areas of the course. For example:

- reflecting on their discussions of consciousness in the core theme, students could contrast the relative contributions of philosophy and science to the debate about this concept
- reflecting on their study of a prescribed text, students could consider how a philosopher formulates, poses and writes about philosophical problems, or responds to the work of other philosophers
- when discussing an extract from a philosophical text, students could consider why certain philosophers choose to write in dialogue form, prose, fiction, poetry, aphorism, and so on.

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
Philosophy and technology	Nature and role of technology; relationship between technology and nature Impact of technology on individuals and societies Philosophical challenges arising from developments in biotechnology, robotics, and information and communication technology	• Is technology value-neutral? • Do we control technology or does technology control us? • Technology as a way of knowing (e.g. Martin Heidegger) • Technology and the annihilation of self (e.g. Gabriel Marcel) • Social constructivist approach (technology and society co-construct each other) • Have recent technological developments fundamentally changed human endeavour and human existence? • Is technology a means to an end or an end in itself? • Technology as a factor determining the economic and social structure of society (e.g. Karl Marx)
Philosophy and the environment	Environmental challenges and degradation Environmental conservation and activism Intrinsic and extrinsic value; deep ecology, social ecology and anthropocentrism	• Do humans have a moral obligation to protect the natural environment? • The relationship between nature and human beings: stewardship, dependence, domination • Concept of <i>ahimsa</i> (e.g. Thiruvalluvar) • The tao of nature (e.g. Lao Tzu) • Nature as an object of exploitation • Environmental challenges: depletion of resources, pollution, climate change, species extinction • The moral and legal status of animals, plants and natural entities

Topics for study	Required content	Suggested examples/discussion questions (This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive)
		- The relationship between “progress” and environmental destruction - Shallow and deep ecology (e.g. Arne Naess)
The nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy	Nature of philosophy Function and meaning of philosophy Philosophical methodology	- What should be the goal of philosophy? - Why are there so many diverse views on the meaning and methods of philosophy? - Does philosophy have a primarily social function? - What sort of knowledge can philosophy yield? - Is conceptual analysis the primary methodology of philosophy? - Is the main purpose of philosophy to enable us to evaluate critically our own beliefs and attitudes? - How relevant are the findings of other disciplines to philosophical discussions? - Does philosophy make progress? - Is there now greater openness to different perspectives and methodologies within philosophy? - Can philosophy inform our understanding of who we are and our place in the world? - Can philosophy be done in isolation?

Links to TOK

The HL extension topic provides excellent opportunities for making links to TOK, particularly to the “scope” and “methods and tools” elements of the knowledge framework used across the TOK course. Reflecting on the scope and methods of philosophy can provide opportunities to compare and contrast these with the scope and methods of other disciplines, helping students to gain a deeper understanding of different areas of knowledge. Students could also, for example, discuss why it is that philosophy once included areas of knowledge that are now distinct (such as natural philosophy and physics) or whether philosophy should be regarded as a discipline in its own right or simply something that tries to analyse the foundations and assumptions of other disciplines.

Assessment in the Diploma Programme

General

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. The most important aims of assessment in the Diploma Programme are that it should support curricular goals and encourage appropriate student learning. Both external and internal assessments are used in the Diploma Programme. IB examiners mark work produced for external assessment, while work produced for internal assessment is marked by teachers and externally moderated by the IB.

There are two types of assessment identified by the IB.

- Formative assessment informs both teaching and learning. It is concerned with providing accurate and helpful feedback to students and teachers on the kind of learning taking place and the nature of students' strengths and weaknesses in order to help develop students' understanding and capabilities. Formative assessment can also help to improve teaching quality, as it can provide information to monitor progress towards meeting the course aims and objectives.
- Summative assessment gives an overview of previous learning and is concerned with measuring student achievement.

A comprehensive assessment plan is viewed as being integral with teaching, learning and course organization. For further information, see the IB *Programme standards and practices* document.

The approach to assessment used by the IB is criterion-related, not norm-referenced. This approach to assessment judges students' work by their performance in relation to identified levels of attainment, and not in relation to the work of other students. For further information on assessment within the Diploma Programme please refer to the publication *Assessment: principles and practice—Quality assessments in a digital age*.

To support teachers in the planning, delivery and assessment of the Diploma Programme courses, a variety of resources can be found on the Programme Resource Centre or purchased from the IB store (store.ibo.org). Additional publications such as specimen papers and markschemes, teacher support materials, subject reports and grade descriptors can also be found on the Programme Resource Centre. Past examination papers as well as markschemes can be purchased from the IB store.

Methods of assessment

The IB uses several methods to assess work produced by students.

Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria are used when the assessment task is open-ended. Each criterion concentrates on a particular skill that students are expected to demonstrate. An assessment objective describes what students should be able to do, and assessment criteria describe how well they should be able to do it. Using assessment criteria allows discrimination between different answers and encourages a variety of responses. Each criterion comprises a set of hierarchically ordered level descriptors. Each level descriptor is worth one or more marks. Each criterion is applied independently using a best-fit model. The maximum marks for each criterion may differ according to the criterion's importance. The marks awarded for each criterion are added together to give the total mark for the piece of work.

Markbands

Markbands are a comprehensive statement of expected performance against which responses are judged. They represent a single holistic criterion divided into level descriptors. Each level descriptor corresponds to

a range of marks to differentiate student performance. A best-fit approach is used to ascertain which particular mark to use from the possible range for each level descriptor.

Markschemes

Analytic markschemes are prepared for those examination questions that expect a particular kind of response and/or a given final answer from students. They give detailed instructions to examiners on how to break down the total mark for each question for different parts of the response.

For some assessment components, marking notes or other types of markschemes (for example consisting of guidance and examples of indicative content) are provided. These give guidance on how to apply the assessment criteria or markbands to the particular requirements of a question.

Inclusive access arrangements

Inclusive access arrangements are available for candidates with access requirements. Standard assessment conditions may put candidates with assessment access requirements at a disadvantage by preventing them from demonstrating their attainment level. Inclusive access arrangements enable candidates to demonstrate their ability under assessment conditions that are as fair as possible.

The IB document *Access and inclusion policy* provides details on all the inclusive access arrangements available to candidates. The IB document *Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes: Removing barriers to learning* outlines the position of the IB with regard to candidates with diverse learning needs in the IB programmes. For candidates affected by adverse circumstances, the publication *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures*, which includes the general regulations, provides details on access consideration.

Responsibilities of the school

The school is required to ensure that equal access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are provided to candidates with learning support requirements that are in line with the IB documents *Access and inclusion policy* and *Learning diversity and inclusion in IB programmes: Removing barriers to learning*.

Acknowledging the ideas or work of another person

Coordinators and teachers are reminded that candidates must acknowledge all sources used in work submitted for assessment. The following is intended as a clarification of this requirement.

Diploma Programme candidates submit work for assessment in a variety of media that may include audiovisual material, text, graphs, images and/or data published in print or electronic sources. If a candidate uses the work or ideas of another person, the candidate must acknowledge the source using a standard style of referencing in a consistent manner. A candidate's failure to acknowledge a source will be investigated by the IB as a potential breach of regulations that may result in a penalty imposed by the IB Final Award Committee.

The IB does not prescribe which style(s) of referencing or in-text citation should be used by candidates; this is left to the discretion of appropriate faculty/staff in the candidate's school. The wide range of subjects, three response languages and the diversity of referencing styles make it impractical and restrictive to insist on particular styles. In practice, certain styles may prove most commonly used, but schools are free to choose a style that is appropriate for the subject concerned and the language in which candidates' work is written. Regardless of the reference style adopted by the school for a given subject, it is expected that the minimum information given includes: name of author, date of publication, title of source, and page numbers as applicable. More information and guidance can be found in the resource *Effective citing and referencing* available on the Programme Resource Centre.

Candidates are expected to use a standard style and use it consistently so that credit is given to all sources used, including sources that have been paraphrased or summarized. When writing text, candidates must clearly distinguish between their words and those of others by the use of quotation marks (or other

method, such as indentation) followed by an appropriate citation that denotes an entry in the bibliography. If an electronic source is cited, the date of access must be indicated. Candidates are not expected to show faultless expertise in referencing, but are expected to demonstrate that all sources have been acknowledged. Candidates must be advised that audiovisual material, text, graphs, images and/or data published in print or in electronic sources that is not their own must also attribute the source. Again, an appropriate style of referencing/citation must be used.

Assessment outline—SL

First assessment 2025

Assessment component	Weighting
External assessment (2 hours 45 minutes)	75%
Paper 1 (1 hour 45 minutes) This paper contains two compulsory sections: section A and section B. - Section A consists of two stimulus-based questions on the core theme. Candidates are required to answer one question. - Section B consists of two essay questions for each of the optional themes. Candidates are required to answer one question. (50 marks)	50%
Paper 2 (1 hour) This paper consists of two questions for each of the prescribed philosophical texts. Each question is split into two parts: part A and part B. Candidates are required to answer one question, and to answer both part A and part B of that question. (25 marks)	25%
Internal assessment (20 hours)	25%
Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus Candidates are required to write a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus. This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course. (25 marks)	

Assessment outline—HL

First assessment 2025

Assessment component	Weighting
External assessment (4 hours 45 minutes)	80%
Paper 1 (2 hours 30 minutes) This paper contains two compulsory sections: section A and section B. - Section A consists of two stimulus-based questions on the core theme. Candidates are required to answer one question. - Section B consists of two essay questions for each of the optional themes. Candidates are required to answer two questions. (75 marks)	40%
Paper 2 (1 hour) This paper consists of two questions for each of the prescribed philosophical texts. Each question is split into two parts: part A and part B. Candidates are required to answer one question, and to answer both part A and part B of that question. (25 marks)	20%
Paper 3 (1 hour 15 minutes) This paper consists of one question based on an unseen text. The question is split into two parts: part A and part B. Candidates are required to answer both part A and part B of the question. (25 marks)	20%
Internal assessment (20 hours)	20%
Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus Candidates are required to write a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus. This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course. (25 marks)	

External assessment

For the externally assessed components of the philosophy course, two different methods are used to assess candidates.

- Markbands
- Detailed markschemes specific to each examination paper

The markbands for paper 1, paper 2 and paper 3 are published in this guide. They are related to the assessment objectives established for the philosophy course and the individuals and societies subject group grade descriptors. Please note, the markbands for paper 1 and paper 2 are identical for SL and HL.

External assessment details

Paper 1

SL

Duration: 1 hour 45 minutes

Weighting: 50%

This paper contains two compulsory sections: section A and section B.

Section A consists of two stimulus-based questions based on the core theme “Being human”. Candidates are required to answer one question.

Section B consists of two essay questions for each of the optional themes. Candidates are required to answer one question.

HL

Duration: 2 hours 30 minutes

Weighting: 40%

This paper contains two compulsory sections: section A and section B.

Section A consists of two stimulus-based questions on the core theme “Being human”. Candidates are required to answer one question.

Section B consists of two essay questions for each of the optional themes. Candidates are required to answer two questions.

Paper 2 (SL and HL)

Duration: 1 hour

Weighting: SL 25%; HL 20%

Paper 2 is identical for SL and HL candidates.

This paper consists of two questions for each of the prescribed philosophical texts. Each question is split into two parts: part A and part B. Candidates are required to answer one question, and to answer both part A and part B of that question.

Paper 2 is an open-book examination. This means that for this paper, candidates are permitted to bring a copy of the selected prescribed text into the examination with them. Candidates may only bring in a copy of one text selected for study from the “[IB list of prescribed philosophical texts](#)” found in the “Syllabus content” section of this guide.

The edition of the text may include an introduction, including an introduction written by another author, but may not include any other critical commentary or explanatory guidance. The text **must not** be annotated; it must be a clean copy of the text. This means that candidates cannot write notes in the text, but also that they cannot add any other annotations such as underlining or highlighting. It is of the utmost importance that candidates are made aware of these requirements and that any unauthorized material found in a text will be treated as academic malpractice.

Please note that in the case of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the text is permitted to include the "Objections and Replies". In the case of Plato's *Republic* and De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, the lengths of the texts concerned means that particular sections from them have been specified for study. However, candidates are permitted to bring a full version of these texts into the examination, not just the text of the specified sections.

It is strongly recommended that schools keep spare clean copies of the selected text in case of issues such as candidates forgetting to bring their copy to the examination.

Paper 3 (HL extension)

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

Weighting: 20%

Paper 3 is taken by HL candidates only.

This paper consists of one question based on an unseen text. The text will be of a philosophical nature and in each examination session it will focus on either philosophy and technology or philosophy and the environment.

The question on this paper is split into two parts: part A and part B. Candidates are required to answer both part A and part B of the question. Part A focuses on explaining an issue/concept raised by the unseen text. Candidates are required to respond to this question making reference to the text and also to their own knowledge. Part B focuses on the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophy. Candidates are required to respond to this question making reference to the text and also to their own experience of doing philosophy in the philosophy course.

External assessment markbands

Paper 1

Section A—Core theme

This task presents candidates with an unseen stimulus in the form of either a short text extract or an image. Candidates are required to explore a philosophical issue related to what it is to be human—the focus of the core theme—that arises from this stimulus. Within their critical exploration of their chosen issue, candidates are required to make explicit reference both to the stimulus and to their wider knowledge from their study of the core theme.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	- A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is implied but not explicitly identified. There is minimal explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Few, if any, references to the stimulus are made in the response. - The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. - The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of

Marks	Level descriptor
	different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	- A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is identified but is imprecisely or vaguely stated. There is some limited explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Occasional references to the stimulus are made in the response. - The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the core theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. - The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	- A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is a basic explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made during the response, although these are sometimes ineffective or unclear. - The response contains some relevant knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and a lack of clarity in places. - The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	- A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is explicitly identified. There is good explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. - The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. - The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	- A philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is clearly and explicitly identified. There is a well-developed explanation of how this issue relates to the stimulus. Clear, effective and specific references to the stimulus are made regularly throughout the response. - The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the core theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. - The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Section B—Optional themes

This task requires candidates to write a thematic essay on the optional theme they have studied (SL) or two optional themes they have studied (HL). Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions per theme, with each question relating to one of the points of required content specified for that theme. Candidates are required to undertake a critical and explicitly philosophical discussion of the question

posed, selecting and using specific examples drawn from their study of the optional theme to support their points.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–5	- There is minimal focus on the question. Points made are poorly organized and frequently unclear. - The response demonstrates little relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. - The response is mostly descriptive and any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are irrelevant and ineffective. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
6–10	- There is some focus on the question, although the specific demands of the question may only be partially addressed. There is some attempt to organize the points made, but it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. - The response demonstrates basic knowledge of the optional theme, but this knowledge lacks accuracy and/or relevance. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. - The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included but are frequently ineffective. There is awareness but limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
11–15	- The response is focused on the question. There is an attempt to organize the points made, although there is some repetition and lack of clarity in places. - The response contains some relevant knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. - The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
16–20	- The response is focused on the question, showing engagement with the specific demands of the question. Points are generally clear and organized, and the response can be easily followed. - The response contains relevant and accurate knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. - The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis may lack development. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
21–25	- There is a sustained focus on the question, showing clear engagement with the specific demands of the question. The points made are clear, coherent and effectively organized. - The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge of the optional theme. Philosophical vocabulary is used accurately and precisely throughout. - The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples drawn from the study of the optional theme are used effectively to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Paper 2

SL and HL (prescribed text)

This task requires candidates to answer a two-part question on the prescribed text that they have studied in depth in class. Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions per text and must answer both part A and part B of their selected question. For this task, candidates are permitted to have access to a clean/non-annotated copy of the prescribed text throughout the examination. It is expected that candidates will make explicit references to this text in their responses.

Part A

Part A requires candidates to explain a specified concept, issue or argument from the prescribed text. It is expected that candidates will include explicit references to the text to support their explanation.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	- Little understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is not used, or is consistently used inappropriately. - The explanation of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is minimal. Points made are superficial and frequently unclear. There are few, if any, references to the text.
3–4	- A basic understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. - The explanation of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is basic and underdeveloped. Points are often imprecise or vague, and it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. There are occasional references to the text.
5–6	- Some understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. - There is a satisfactory explanation of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text, although the explanation lacks clarity and development in places. Relevant points are made but lack accuracy and detail. Specific references to the text are made, although these are sometimes ineffective.
7–8	- Good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. - The explanation of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is clear, but is in need of further development. Points made are relevant and accurate but lack detail. There are specific references to the text.
9–10	- Very good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is demonstrated. There is accurate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary. - The explanation of the specified concept/issue/argument from the text is clear and well developed. Points are relevant, accurate and detailed. There are specific and effective references to the text.

Part B

Part B requires candidates to undertake a critical discussion of a specified concept, issue or argument from the prescribed text. As part A and part B of each question are based on the same specified concept, issue or argument from the prescribed text, candidates are not required to repeat explanatory material from their part A response.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	- Little understanding of and critical engagement with the specified concept/issue/argument from the prescribed text is demonstrated. - Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately. Points are frequently inaccurate and unclear. There are few, if any, references to the text. - The response is descriptive. Any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are not included or are irrelevant. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
4–6	- A basic understanding of and critical engagement with the specified concept/issue/argument from the prescribed text is demonstrated. - Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. Points are frequently imprecise or vague, and it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. There are occasional references to the text. - There is limited analysis present and overall the response is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
7–9	- Some understanding of and critical engagement with the specified concept/issue/argument from the prescribed text is demonstrated. - Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. Relevant points are made but lack accuracy and development. Specific references to the text are made, although these are sometimes ineffective. - The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
10–12	- Good understanding of and critical engagement with the specified concept/issue/argument from the prescribed text is demonstrated. - Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. Points made are relevant and accurate but lack detail. There are specific references to the text. - The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are used to support the discussion. There is discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
13–15	- Very good understanding of and critical engagement with the specified concept/issue/argument from the prescribed text is demonstrated. - There is accurate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary. Points are relevant, accurate and detailed. There are specific and effective references to the text. - The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used to support the discussion. There is critical discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Paper 3

HL extension (philosophy and contemporary issues)

This task requires candidates to answer a two-part question based on an unseen text. The text will be of a philosophical nature and in each examination session it will focus on either philosophy and technology or philosophy and the environment. Candidates must answer both part A and part B of the question.

Part A

Part A requires candidates to explain a specified concept, issue or argument from the unseen text. It is expected that candidates will include explicit references to the text to support their explanation.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	- Little understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is not used, or is consistently used inappropriately. - The explanation is minimal. Points made are superficial and frequently unclear. There are few, if any, references to the unseen text.
3–4	- A basic understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, but often inappropriately. - The explanation is basic and underdeveloped. Points are often imprecise or vague, and it is often unclear what the response is trying to convey. There are occasional references to the unseen text.
5–6	- Some understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately. - There is a satisfactory explanation, although this explanation lacks clarity and development in places. Relevant points are made but lack accuracy and detail. Specific references to the unseen text are made, although these are sometimes ineffective.
7–8	- Good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately. - The explanation is clear, although may be in need of further development. Points made are relevant and accurate but lack detail. There are specific references to the unseen text.
9–10	- Very good understanding of the specified concept/issue/argument from the unseen text is demonstrated. There is accurate and precise use of philosophical vocabulary. - The explanation is clear and well developed. Points are relevant, accurate and detailed. There are specific and effective references to the unseen text.

Part B

Part B picks out a feature of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy highlighted by the unseen text, and asks candidates to engage in a critical discussion of how this feature impacts the usefulness of philosophy in helping us to engage with pressing issues. Candidates are required to respond to this question making reference to the text and also to their own experience of doing philosophy in the philosophy course.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	- Little understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There is limited reference to the candidate's personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are few, if any, references to the unseen text. - The response is descriptive. Any analysis present is superficial or incoherent. Examples are not included or are irrelevant. There is little or no discussion of different points of view. Where a conclusion is included, this is very superficial or is not consistent with the rest of the response.
4–6	Basic understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There is some reference to the candidate's personal experience of

Marks	Level descriptor
	engaging in philosophical activity. References are made to the unseen text, but these are more implicit than explicit and/or lack relevance to the question. The response contains limited analysis and overall is more descriptive than analytical. Examples are included but are ineffective. There is limited discussion of different points of view. A simplistic conclusion is included.
7–9	- Some understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are specific references to the candidate's personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. Specific references to the unseen text are made, although these sometimes lack relevance to the question or are more implicit than explicit. - The response contains analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are included. There is some discussion of different points of view. A conclusion is included.
10–12	- Good understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are explicit references to the candidate's personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are specific references to the unseen text. - The response contains critical analysis, although this analysis lacks development. Examples are used to support the discussion. There is some discussion of different points of view. The response argues to a conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.
13–15	- Very good understanding of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy is demonstrated. There are explicit references to the candidate's personal experience of engaging in philosophical activity. There are specific and explicit references to the unseen text. - The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant examples are used effectively to support the discussion. Different points of view are identified and evaluated. The response argues to a reasoned and clearly stated conclusion that is consistent with the arguments presented.

Internal assessment

Purpose of internal assessment

Internal assessment is an integral part of the course and is compulsory for both SL and HL students. It enables students to demonstrate the application of their skills and knowledge, and to pursue their personal interests, without the time limitations and other constraints that are associated with written examinations. The internal assessment should, as far as possible, be woven into normal classroom teaching and not be a separate activity conducted after a course has been taught.

The internal assessment requirements at SL and at HL are the same. Students are required to write a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus. The exercise is worth 25 marks and the word limit is 2,000 words, excluding bibliography or references. The word limit also does not include the copy/description of the stimulus, which must be included with the response.

Guidance and authenticity

The philosophical analysis submitted for internal assessment must be the student's own work. However, it is not the intention that students should decide upon a title or topic and be left to work on the internal assessment component without any further support from the teacher. The teacher should play an important role during both the planning stage and the period when the student is working on the internally assessed work. It is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that students are familiar with:

- the requirements of the type of work to be internally assessed
- the assessment criteria; students must understand that the work submitted for assessment must address these criteria effectively.

Teachers and students must discuss the internally assessed work. Students should be encouraged to initiate discussions with the teacher to obtain advice and information, and students must not be penalized for seeking guidance. As part of the learning process, teachers should read and give advice to students on one draft of the work. The teacher should provide oral or written advice on how the work could be improved, but not edit the draft. The next version handed to the teacher must be the final version for submission.

It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that all students understand the basic meaning and significance of concepts that relate to academic integrity, especially authenticity and intellectual property. Teachers must ensure that all student work for assessment is prepared according to the requirements and must explain clearly to students that the internally assessed work must be entirely their own. Where collaboration between students is permitted, it must be clear to all students what the difference is between collaboration and collusion.

All work submitted to the IB for moderation or assessment must be authenticated by a teacher and must not include any known instances of suspected or confirmed malpractice. Each student must confirm that the work is their authentic work and constitutes the final version of that work. Once a student has officially submitted the final version of the work it cannot be retracted. The requirement to confirm the authenticity of work applies to the work of all students, not just the sample work that will be submitted to the IB for the purpose of moderation. For further details refer to the IB publications *Academic integrity policy*, *Diploma Programme: From principles into practice* and the relevant general regulations (in *Diploma Programme Assessment procedures*). Authenticity may be checked by discussion with the student on the content of the work, and scrutiny of one or more of the following.

- The student's initial proposal
- The first draft of the written work
- The references cited

- The style of writing compared with work known to be that of the student
- The analysis of the work by a web-based plagiarism detection service such as www.turnitin.com

The same piece of work cannot be submitted to meet the requirements of both the internal assessment and the extended essay.

Group work

Group work **may not** be undertaken by students for this subject.

Time allocation

Internal assessment is an integral part of the philosophy course, contributing 25% to the final assessment in the SL course and 20% to the final assessment in the HL course. This importance should be reflected in the time that is allocated to teaching the knowledge, skills and understanding required to undertake the work, as well as the total time allocated to carry out the work.

It is recommended that a total of approximately 20 hours of teaching time should be allocated to the work. This should include:

- time for the teacher to explain to students the requirements of the internal assessment
- class time for students to work on the internal assessment component and ask questions
- time for consultation between the teacher and each student
- time to review and monitor progress, and to check authenticity.

Using assessment criteria for internal assessment

For internal assessment, a number of assessment criteria have been identified. Each assessment criterion has level descriptors describing specific achievement levels, together with an appropriate range of marks. The level descriptors concentrate on positive achievement, although for the lower levels failure to achieve may be included in the description.

Teachers must judge the internally assessed work at SL and at HL against the criteria using the level descriptors.

- The same assessment criteria are provided for SL and HL.
- The aim is to find, for each criterion, the descriptor that conveys most accurately the level attained by the student, using the best-fit model. A best-fit approach means that compensation should be made when a piece of work matches different aspects of a criterion at different levels. The mark awarded should be one that most fairly reflects the balance of achievement against the criterion. It is not necessary for every single aspect of a level descriptor to be met for that mark to be awarded.
- When assessing a student's work, teachers should read the level descriptors for each criterion until they reach a descriptor that most appropriately describes the level of the work being assessed. If a piece of work seems to fall between two descriptors, both descriptors should be read again and the one that more appropriately describes the student's work should be chosen.
- Where there are two or more marks available within a level, teachers should award the upper marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a great extent; the work may be close to achieving marks in the level above. Teachers should award the lower marks if the student's work demonstrates the qualities described to a lesser extent; the work may be close to achieving marks in the level below.
- Only whole numbers should be recorded; partial marks (fractions and decimals) are not acceptable.
- Teachers should not think in terms of a pass or fail boundary, but should concentrate on identifying the appropriate descriptor for each assessment criterion.

- The highest level descriptors do not imply faultless performance but should be achievable by a student. Teachers should not hesitate to use the extremes if they are appropriate descriptions of the work being assessed.
- A student who attains a high achievement level in relation to one criterion will not necessarily attain high achievement levels in relation to the other criteria. Similarly, a student who attains a low achievement level for one criterion will not necessarily attain low achievement levels for the other criteria. Teachers should not assume that the overall assessment of the students will produce any particular distribution of marks.
- It is recommended that the assessment criteria be made available to students.

Internal assessment details—SL and HL

Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus

Duration: 20 hours

Weighting: SL 25%; HL 20%

Word limit: 2,000 words

Candidates at both SL and HL must produce a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.

Candidates are required to identify a philosophical issue raised by the stimulus and analyse it in a philosophical way. Suitable non-philosophical stimuli include, but are not limited to:

- novels, plays or poems
- song lyrics
- cartoons, paintings, photographs or other visual images
- films, television shows and radio broadcasts
- advertisements
- newspaper articles/letters/online content such as social media posts, blogs, etc.

Short stimuli such as newspaper articles can be analysed in their entirety. Where novels or plays are used, a section of no more than 1,000 words (approximately two pages) should be selected for analysis. In the case of television shows or radio broadcasts, a section of no more than 10 minutes and no more than 2 scenes should be selected for analysis.

When the source material is an image or contains 200 words or fewer, candidates must include a copy of this material with their response. When the source material contains more than 200 words or is in another format—for example, a scene from a film—candidates must include a description of the stimulus with their response. Descriptions of stimuli must be no more than 200 words. All stimulus material must be accurately referenced.

The word limit for this task is 2,000 words, excluding bibliography or references. The word limit also does not include the copy/description of the stimulus, which must be included with the response.

Internal assessment criteria—SL and HL

Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus

The internal assessment for candidates at both SL and HL requires them to produce a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus. The analysis is assessed using the following five criteria.

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

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.

Marks	Level descriptor
1	The philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is implied but not explicitly identified. There is no justification of the connection between the stimulus and the philosophical issue identified.
2	The philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is clearly identified. There is some justification of the connection between the stimulus and the philosophical issue identified.
3	The philosophical issue raised by the stimulus is clearly and explicitly identified. There is a clear justification of the connection between the stimulus and the philosophical issue identified.

Criterion B: Clarity (4 marks)

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	The response is poorly structured, or where there is a recognizable structure there is minimal focus on the task. Most points are vague and unclear.
2	The response contains an attempt to follow a structured approach although it is sometimes unclear what it is trying to convey. Many points lack clarity and precision.
3	The response is structured and generally organized, and can be easily followed. Points are generally clear and coherent.
4	The response is focused and effectively structured. All or nearly all of the points made are clear and coherent.

Criterion C: Knowledge and understanding (4 marks)

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1	There is little relevant knowledge. The explanation of the philosophical issue is minimal. Philosophical vocabulary is not used or is consistently used inappropriately.
2	Some knowledge is demonstrated but this lacks accuracy and relevance. There is a basic explanation of the philosophical issue. Philosophical vocabulary is used, sometimes appropriately.
3	Knowledge is mostly accurate and relevant. There is a satisfactory explanation of the philosophical issue. Philosophical vocabulary is used, mostly appropriately.
4	The response contains relevant, accurate and detailed knowledge. There is a well-developed explanation of the philosophical issue. There is appropriate use of philosophical vocabulary throughout the response.

Criterion D: Analysis (8 marks)

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.

Marks	Level descriptor
1–2	The response is mostly descriptive. There is little analysis. Where examples are included, these are ineffective and/or irrelevant.
3–4	The response contains limited analysis but is more descriptive than analytical. Some examples are included.
5–6	The response contains analysis, but this analysis lacks development. Relevant examples are used to support the argument.
7–8	The response contains well-developed critical analysis. Relevant and clearly presented examples are used effectively to support the argument.

Criterion E: Evaluation (6 marks)

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is little critical discussion of different points of view. Few of the main points are justified. There is no conclusion, or the conclusion is not relevant.
3–4	There is some critical discussion of different points of view. Some of the main points are justified. The conclusion is stated but is superficial or not entirely consistent with the argument.
5–6	There is clear critical discussion of different points of view. All or nearly all of the main points are justified. The response argues from a consistently held position. The conclusion is clearly stated and consistent with the argument.

The learning and teaching of philosophy

From its beginnings, the Diploma Programme has adopted a broadly constructivist and student-centred approach and has emphasized the importance of students linking their learning to their local and global contexts. These ideas are still at the heart of an IB education today.

The six approaches to teaching (teaching that is inquiry-based, conceptually focused, contextualized, collaborative, differentiated and informed by assessment) underpin all IB programmes. They are intended to help teachers ensure that the aspirations of an IB education translate into practice in the classroom. The approaches to teaching also place a great deal of emphasis on relationships. This reflects the IB's belief that educational outcomes are profoundly shaped by the relationships between teachers and students, and recognizes the many ways that people work together to construct meaning and make sense of the world.

It is intended that the teaching of the Diploma Programme philosophy course centres around a cycle of inquiry, action and reflection—an interplay of asking, doing and thinking—that informs the daily activities of teachers and learners. This section of the guide provides additional guidance on three topics that are particularly relevant to approaching the philosophy course in this inquiry-driven way: the focus on “doing philosophy”, using philosophical texts, and engaging with sensitive and controversial topics in the philosophy classroom.

Further guidance on approaching the teaching of the philosophy course, including examples of unit plans and examples of assessed student work, can also be found in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

“Doing philosophy”

Socrates did not teach philosophy, he taught to philosophize.

(Marie-France Daniel, Emmanuelle Auriac, 2011, p. 416)

The emphasis of the philosophy course is on “doing philosophy”; on engaging students in philosophical activity and encouraging them to develop into independent thinkers. In this way, the course places importance on students developing their own views, opinions and ideas. It focuses on critical discussion of questions rather than just the memorization of information or simple repetition of other people's opinions.

One useful strategy to help reinforce this focus on philosophical thinking can be to encourage students to reflect on questions such as the following.

- What do I think about this problem/question? What possible objections/counterarguments could be levelled against my position? What examples support my arguments and help me to develop my position further?
- What does this author think of this problem? What do I think about the standpoint of the author? What might a different author think about the same problem?
- What possible resolutions could there be to this problem? How do the different standpoints help me move forward in my thinking?

This approach to teaching philosophy can present challenges for teachers; it is arguably simpler to teach students about philosophy than it is to teach them to engage in philosophical activity themselves. However, this approach also has a number of benefits: it can encourage students' personal engagement and sense of journey during the course, as well as cultivating skills and dispositions such as curiosity, conceptual understanding, and critical thinking. It reflects the view that “the full set of benefits made available by an education in philosophy includes but extends well beyond knowledge of the history of philosophy and mastery of a philosophical lexicon” (Rudisill, 2011, p. 241).

The emphasis on “doing philosophy” is not meant to imply that gaining knowledge is not an important part of philosophical activity. It is impossible to analyse and evaluate an argument or issue effectively without a

secure knowledge and understanding of the pertinent points, and students are expected to make reference to relevant philosophers and philosophical ideas to support their arguments. The focus on "doing philosophy" has the benefit of being an approach that goes beyond knowing about different philosophers and positions.

For most students the philosophy course is their first experience of studying the subject. It is therefore essential that teachers explicitly highlight the idea of philosophy as an active process, and of the importance of students developing their own philosophical voice and becoming independent thinkers. It is therefore important that teachers emphasize to their students that philosophy is not simply an area of knowledge but is also a specific type of intellectual activity.

In paper 3, the course's focus on "doing philosophy" is made particularly explicit through the inclusion of an exploration of the nature, function, meaning and methodology of philosophical activity. Through inquiry into pressing contemporary issues, students are encouraged to consider how philosophy can help us to engage with and navigate these issues. This provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their own experience of having followed the philosophy course.

Using philosophical texts

Students at both SL and HL are required to study one text from the [list of 12 prescribed philosophical texts](#). Some students may find the thought of reading one of these primary philosophical texts intimidating. When selecting the texts for the prescribed text list, every effort has been made to avoid those where the language used is inaccessibly challenging, however, this is still a demanding element of the course. It is nevertheless an element that has huge value and benefits, not least in providing the opportunity for students to engage deeply with the ideas of an influential philosopher.

It is strongly advised that the study of the prescribed text should take place primarily in class, with the support and direction of the teacher. It should be noted that this guide suggests 40 hours should be dedicated to the study of this text, and so students must undertake detailed study of the text itself rather than simply, for example, studying a commentary on the text. The texts should be studied in their entirety, except in the case of Plato and De Beauvoir where the lengths of the texts concerned mean that particular sections of the texts have been specified for study.

In paper 2, where the prescribed text is assessed, students are expected to engage critically with the selected text. This is reflected in how the engagement with the text is assessed. Each question on the paper consists of two parts, where students are first asked to explain a key concept, idea or argument from the prescribed text they have studied, and then to engage in a critical discussion of that concept, idea, or argument. In this way, knowledge and understanding of the text is important, but as a foundation for the student to then go on to engage critically with the text and to develop and articulate their own view about the concepts, ideas and arguments in the text.

Teachers must select only one text from the list to study in full with their students, as it would not be possible to cover more than one text in the level of detail expected. They are also encouraged to use short extracts from other philosophical texts to support their teaching of the other elements of the course. Using short extracts from philosophical texts throughout the course can be an excellent way to introduce students to this type of writing and to increase their confidence in working with these types of texts before they undertake the study of a text in its entirety.

Examples of texts that can provide useful short extracts for study of each of the themes are provided in the *Philosophy teacher support material*. These are in no way mandatory, recommended or the "best" texts available—they are intended simply as helpful examples. Teachers are encouraged to exercise flexibility, creativity and innovation in the design and delivery of the philosophy course, including in their choice of texts.

Engaging students with a variety of philosophical perspectives is an essential aspect of enabling them to appreciate the diversity of approaches within philosophical thinking, and to appreciate the existence of a plurality of distinct, yet overlapping, philosophical traditions and approaches. This engagement with diverse perspectives can be achieved in a variety of ways, including through the use of extracts from texts

by philosophers from more than one historical period or more than one philosophical tradition, or from a variety of cultural or geographic contexts.

Engaging with sensitive and controversial topics

Studying philosophy allows the opportunity for students to engage with exciting, stimulating and personally relevant issues. However, sometimes such topics can also be personally challenging for students; for example, discussions of topics such as life after death or ethical issues such as abortion can be sensitive or invoke strong personal feelings in students. Teachers should plan such discussions carefully and provide guidance to students on how to approach and engage with such topics in a sensitive and responsible manner.

One helpful strategy for engaging with sensitive and controversial topics can be to set clear classroom agreements, such as listening respectfully to others, avoiding inflammatory language, and criticizing ideas rather than people. Making use of routines such as the various visible thinking routines from Harvard Project Zero (see, for example, *Making Thinking Visible* by Ron Ritchhart et al. 2011) can be a helpful way to provide structure to these kinds of discussions and to ensure that the focus remains clearly on learning. With new groups of students, another helpful strategy can be to begin with examples and topics that are more distant in terms of geography or time, to build relationships and establish expectations, before moving into discussions of more immediate and challenging issues.

Additional guidance on engaging with sensitive and controversial issues in the philosophy classroom can be found in the *Philosophy teacher support material*.

Glossary of command terms for philosophy

Students should be familiar with the following key terms and phrases used in examination questions, which are to be understood as described below. Although these terms will be used frequently in examination questions, other terms may be used to direct students to present an argument in a specific way.

Command term	Assessment objective	Definition
Discuss	AO3	Offer a considered and balanced review that includes a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses. Opinions or conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidence.
Evaluate	AO3	Make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations.
Examine	AO3	Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue.
Explain	AO2	Give a detailed account including reasons or causes.
Explore	AO3	Undertake a systematic process of discovery.
To what extent	AO3	Consider the merits or otherwise of an argument or concept. Opinions and conclusions should be presented clearly and supported with appropriate evidence and sound argument.

Bibliography

This bibliography lists the works cited in this guide and the main works used to inform the curriculum review process. It is not an exhaustive list and does not include all the literature available. This bibliography is not a list of recommended textbooks. Note that some of the resources used in this guide are only available in English.

Aristotle. (1987). *De Anima*. Penguin.

Chanthalangsy, P., & Crowley, J. (2014). *Philosophy manual: A south-south perspective*. UNESCO.

Chukwudi Eze, E. (Ed.). (1997). *Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader*. Blackwell.

Daniel, M., & Auriac, E. (2011). Philosophy, critical thinking and philosophy for children. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(5), 415–435.

Feyerabend, P. (1975). *Against method*. New Left Books.

Floridi, L. (2014). *The 4th revolution: How the infosphere is reshaping human reality*. Oxford University Press.

Ganeri, J. (2012). *The self: naturalism, consciousness, and the first-person stance*. Oxford University Press.

Gardner, H. (2018, July 9). Why we should require all students to take 2 philosophy courses. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-we-should-require-all-students-to-take-2-philosophy-courses/>

Glasgow, J., Haslanger, S., Jeffers, C., & Spencer, Q. (2019). *What is race? Four philosophical views*. Oxford University Press.

Hand, M., & Winstanley, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Philosophy in schools*. Continuum Studies in Research in Education.

Kant, I. (2008). *Critique of judgement* (J. C. Meredith, Trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1790)

Kapp, E. (2018). *Elements of a philosophy of technology: On the evolutionary history of culture* (J. W. Kirkwood & L. Weatherby, Eds.). University Of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1877)

Locke, J. (1690). *An essay concerning human understanding*. Oxford University Press.

Maimonides, M. (1995). *The guide for the perplexed* (C. Rabin, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Co. (Original work published 1186)

McCall, C. (1999). *Transforming thinking: Philosophical inquiry in the primary and secondary classroom*. Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1983). *The structure of behaviour*. Duquesne University Press.

Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Cornell University Press.

Nasr, S. H. (2003). *Man and nature: The spiritual crisis in modern man*. Kazi Publications.

Plato. (2014). *Theaetetus*. Oxford University Press. (Original work published in 369 BCE)

Popper, K. (2002). *The logic of scientific discovery*. Taylor & Francis. (Original work published 1934)

Ritchhart, R., Church, M., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Making thinking visible: How to promote engagement, understanding and independence for all learners*. Jossey-Bass.

Rudisill, J. (2011). The transition from studying philosophy to doing philosophy. *Teaching Philosophy*, 34(3), 241–271. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/teachphil201134332>

Sartre, J. (2007). *Existentialism is a humanism*. Yale University Press.

Singer, P. (1971). *Famine, affluence, and morality*. Oxford University Press.

Sveinsdóttir, A. (2018). *Categories we live by: The construction of sex, gender, race, and other social categories*. Oxford University Press.

Townley, C. (2010). Recent trends in global philosophy. In J. Garfield & W. Edelglass (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of world philosophy*. Oxford University Press.

Walker, G. (2004). *To educate the nations 2: Reflections on an international education*. John Catt Education.

Walker, G. (Ed.). (2011). *The changing face of international education: Challenges for the IB*. International Baccalaureate Organization.

Wollheim, R. (1980). *Art and its objects* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.