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# AS PHILOSOPHY

(7171)

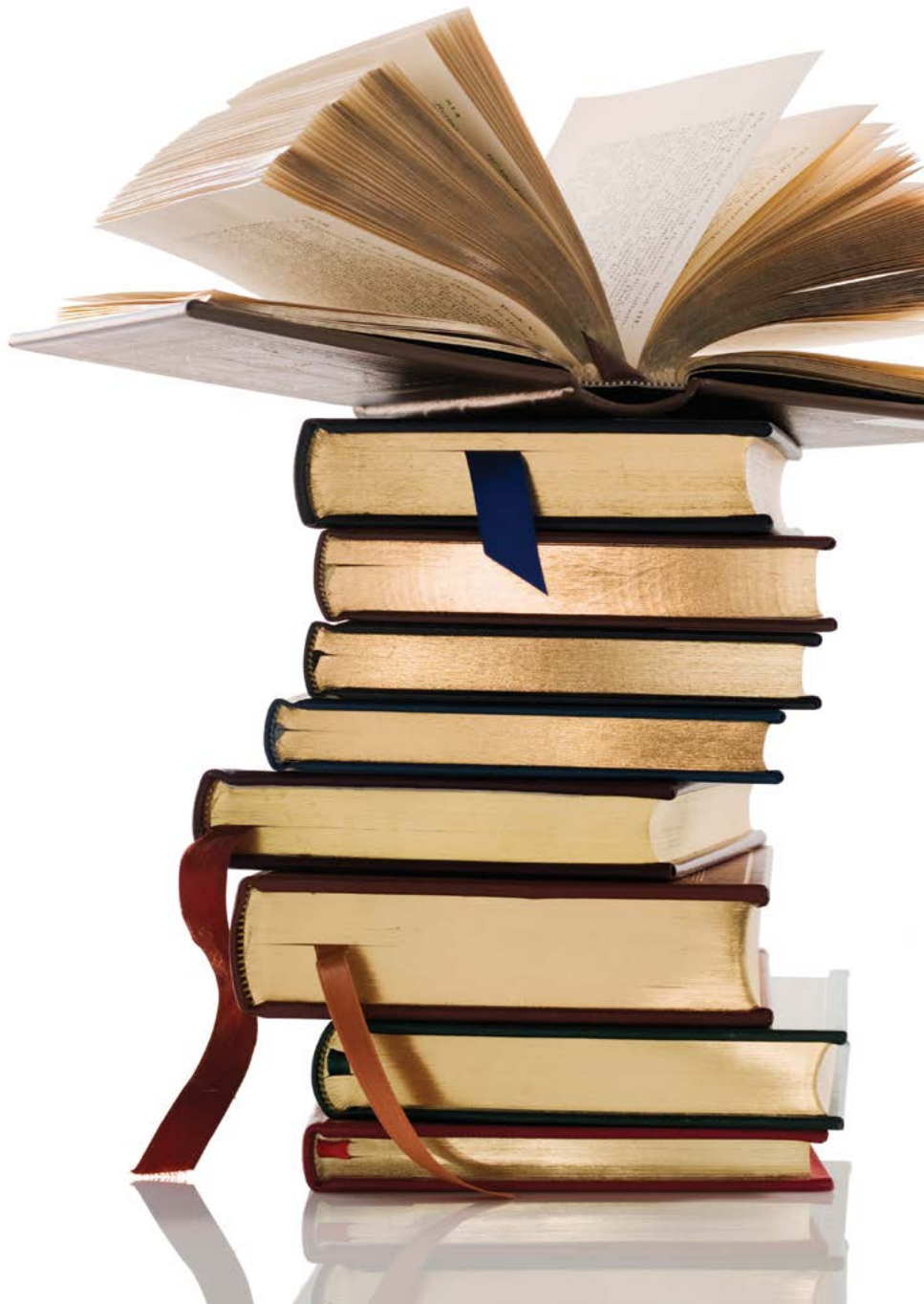
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**Specification**

For teaching from September 2017 onwards  
For exams in 2018 onwards

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Version 1.0 26 October 2016





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## Are you using the latest version of this specification?

- You will always find the most up-to-date version of this specification on our website at [aqa.org.uk/7171](http://aqa.org.uk/7171)
- We will write to you if there are significant changes to the specification.

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Why choose AQA for AS Philosophy

### Designed for you and your students

Our new AS and A-level Philosophy qualifications are designed to give your students a thorough grounding in the key concepts and methods of philosophy. Students will have the opportunity to engage with big questions in a purely secular context. Our qualifications are fully co-teachable, so you can teach AS and A-level students in the same class.

Your students will develop important skills that they need for progression to higher education. They'll learn to be clear and precise in their thinking and writing. They will engage with complex texts, analysing and evaluating the arguments of others and constructing and defending their own arguments.

### The specification

We've designed these qualifications with help from teachers and subject experts. We've looked to minimise content changes, providing continuity from our current AS and A-level specifications so you'll find a mix of familiar topics. We have introduced some updated content to ensure that the work of women philosophers is represented.

### Clear, well-structured exams

We've retained the structure and layout of our AS and A-level question papers and mark schemes providing continuity with the current specifications.

You can find out about all our Philosophy qualifications at [aqa.org.uk/philosophy](http://aqa.org.uk/philosophy)

## 1.2 Support and resources to help you teach

We've worked with experienced teachers to provide you with a range of resources that will help you confidently plan, teach and prepare for exams.

### 1.2.1 Teaching resources

Visit [aqa.org.uk/7171](http://aqa.org.uk/7171) to see all our teaching resources. They include:

- a thorough anthology to help you access the set texts
- sample schemes of work to help you plan your course with confidence
- training courses to help you deliver AQA Philosophy qualifications
- subject expertise courses for all teachers, from newly qualified teachers who are just getting started to experienced teachers looking for fresh inspiration.

## 1.2.2 Preparing for exams

Visit [aqa.org.uk/7171](http://aqa.org.uk/7171) for everything you need to prepare for our exams, including:

- past papers, mark schemes and examiners' reports
- specimen papers and mark schemes for new courses
- example student answers with examiner commentaries.

## 1.2.3 Analyse your students' results with Enhanced Results Analysis (ERA)

Find out which questions were the most challenging, how the results compare to previous years and where your students need to improve. ERA, our free online results analysis tool, will help you see where to focus your teaching. Register at [aqa.org.uk/era](http://aqa.org.uk/era)

For information about results, including maintaining standards over time, grade boundaries and our post-results services, visit [aqa.org.uk/results](http://aqa.org.uk/results)

## 1.2.4 Keep your skills up-to-date with professional development

Wherever you are in your career, there's always something new to learn. As well as subject specific training, we offer a range of courses to help boost your skills.

- Improve your teaching skills in areas including differentiation, teaching literacy and meeting Ofsted requirements.
- Prepare for a new role with our leadership and management courses.

You can attend a course at venues around the country, in your school or online – whatever suits your needs and availability. Find out more at [coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk](http://coursesandevents.aqa.org.uk)

## 1.2.5 Help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/7171](http://aqa.org.uk/7171)

If you'd like us to share news and information about this qualification, sign up for emails and updates at [aqa.org.uk/from-2017](http://aqa.org.uk/from-2017)

Alternatively, you can call or email our subject team direct.

E: [philosophy@aca.org.uk](mailto:philosophy@aca.org.uk)

T: 01483 477 822

# 2 Specification at a glance

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This qualification is linear. Linear means that students will sit all their exams at the end of the course.

## 2.1 Subject content

1. [Epistemology](#) (page 10)
2. [Moral philosophy](#) (page 13)

## 2.2 Assessments

Paper 1: Epistemology and moral philosophy
<b>What's assessed</b> All Subject-specific content
<b>How it's assessed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Written exam: 3 hours</li><li>• 80 marks</li><li>• 100% of AS</li></ul>
<b>Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Section A : Five questions on epistemology</li><li>• Section B : Five questions on moral philosophy</li></ul>





# 3 Subject content

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AS philosophy comprises two topic areas: Epistemology and Moral philosophy.

Students are required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the content, including through the use of philosophical analysis (conceptual analysis and argument analysis). They must also be able to analyse and evaluate the philosophical arguments within the subject content to form reasoned judgements. In doing this, they will:

- understand the ways in which philosophers have analysed the core concepts of philosophy, and be able to identify how subtle differences in analyses can have wider impacts on philosophical arguments
- understand the main philosophical arguments within topics, through the works of philosophers, and articulate those arguments in appropriate forms, correctly, clearly and precisely
- understand the philosophical claims which are made within each topic and be able to articulate those claims correctly, clearly and precisely. Students must also articulate how those claims might relate to other topic areas
- understand the ways in which philosophical arguments are developed, issues are raised, and arguments are reformulated in response to those issues
- understand the similarities and differences between the forms of reasoning used in different philosophical content areas, including the similarities and differences between different kinds of knowledge
- generate responses using appropriate philosophical formats, to a range of philosophical questions. These responses must include: articulating definitions; articulating arguments and counter-arguments; and selecting, applying and evaluating appropriate material to generate their own arguments.

At the end of each topic is a list of texts which relate to that topic. Students must demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to make a reasoned evaluation of, the arguments set out in those texts. Where a particular section of text is specified, students are not expected to be familiar with arguments beyond that section. Credit is available, where appropriate, for students whose responses demonstrate wider reading and understanding, but full credit is available for students who don't go beyond the specified section(s).

Students must also demonstrate understanding of and be able to use the philosophical terminology correctly. In addition to the philosophical terminology set out in each section, students must understand and be able to use the following philosophical terminology:

- assertion/claim, proposition
- antecedent/consequent
- analytic/synthetic
- a priori/a posteriori
- necessary/contingent
- consistent/inconsistent
- objective/subjective
- tautology
- dilemma
- paradox
- prove/proof

- true/false
- justification

Students must also understand and be able to use the language of argumentation correctly and be able to:

- identify argument within text
- identify the structure of an argument: premises (including assumptions), reasons, conclusions (including sub-conclusions) and inferences
- identify different forms of argument – including deduction and induction (including abduction) – and be able to analyse and evaluate arguments in ways appropriate to their form (including in terms of validity/invalidity, soundness/unsoundness, certainty/probability)
- recognise and deal appropriately with different types of arguments/reasoning, including arguments from analogy and hypothetical reasoning (including the use of Ockham's Razor)
- recognise and deal appropriately with flaws in argument, including circularity, contradictions, question-begging and other fallacies
- use examples and counter-examples
- generate arguments, objections and counter-arguments.

The specification content sets out what should be taught and learned. Where particular specification content is marked with an *ie* (that is), then that content must be taught. *ie* (that is) is used to clarify precisely what is meant by specific content.

## 3.1 Epistemology

### 3.1.1 What is knowledge?

- The distinction between acquaintance knowledge, ability knowledge and propositional knowledge.
- The nature of definition (including Linda Zagzebski) and how propositional knowledge may be analysed/defined.

#### The tripartite view

Propositional knowledge is defined as justified true belief: S knows that p if and only if:

1. S is justified in believing that p,
2. p is true and
3. S believes that p (individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions).

Issues with the tripartite view including:

- the conditions are not individually necessary
- the conditions are not sufficient - cases of lucky true beliefs (including Edmund Gettier's original two counter examples).
  - Responses: alternative post-Gettier analyses/definitions of knowledge including:
    - strengthen the justification condition (*ie* infallibilism)
    - add a 'no false lemmas' condition (J+T+B+N)
    - replace 'justified' with 'reliably formed' (R+T+B) (*ie* reliabilism)
    - replace 'justified' with an account of epistemic virtue (V+T+B).

## 3.1.2 Perception as a source of knowledge

### Direct realism

The immediate objects of perception are mind-independent objects and their properties.

Issues including:

- the argument from illusion
- the argument from perceptual variation
- the argument from hallucination
- the time-lag argument

and responses to these issues.

### Indirect realism

The immediate objects of perception are mind-dependent objects (sense-data) that are caused by and represent mind-independent objects.

- John Locke's primary/secondary quality distinction.

Issues including:

- the argument that it leads to scepticism about the existence of mind-independent objects
  - Responses including:
    - Locke's argument from the involuntary nature of our experience
    - the argument from the coherence of various kinds of experience, as developed by Locke and Catharine Trotter Cockburn (attrib)
    - Bertrand Russell's response that the external world is the 'best hypothesis'.
- The argument from George Berkeley that we cannot know the nature of mind-independent objects because mind-dependent ideas cannot be like mind-independent objects.

### Berkeley's idealism

The immediate objects of perception (ie ordinary objects such as tables, chairs, etc) are mind-dependent objects.

- Arguments for idealism including Berkeley's attack on the primary/secondary quality distinction and his 'Master' argument.

Issues including:

- arguments from illusion and hallucination
- idealism leads to solipsism
- problems with the role played by God in Berkeley's Idealism (including how can Berkeley claim that our ideas exist within God's mind given that he believes that God cannot feel pain or have sensations?)

and responses to these issues.

## 3.1.3 Reason as a source of knowledge

### Innatism

- Arguments from Plato (ie the 'slave boy' argument) and Gottfried Leibniz (ie his argument based on necessary truths).

Empiricist responses including:

- Locke's arguments against innatism
- the mind as a 'tabula rasa' (the nature of impressions and ideas, simple and complex concepts)

and issues with these responses.

### 3.1.3.2 The intuition and deduction thesis

- The meaning of 'intuition' and 'deduction' and the distinction between them.
- René Descartes' notion of 'clear and distinct ideas'.
- His cogito as an example of an a priori intuition.
- His arguments for the existence of God and his proof of the external world as examples of a priori deductions.

Empiricist responses including:

- responses to Descartes' cogito
- responses to Descartes' arguments for the existence of God and his proof of the external world (including how Hume's Fork might be applied to these arguments)

and issues with these responses.

## The limits of knowledge

- Particular nature of philosophical scepticism and the distinction between philosophical scepticism and normal incredulity.
- The role/function of philosophical scepticism within epistemology.
- The distinction between local and global scepticism and the (possible) global application of philosophical scepticism.
- Descartes' sceptical arguments (the three 'waves of doubt').
- Responses to scepticism: the application of the following as responses to the challenge of scepticism:
  - Descartes' own response
  - empiricist responses (Locke, Berkeley and Russell)
  - reliabilism.

## Set texts

Berkeley, George (1713), *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*

Descartes, René (1641), *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Gettier, Edmund (1963), 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?' *Analysis*, 23(6): 121–123

Hume, David (1748), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 2 and Section 4 (part 1)

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1705), *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Preface and Book 1

Locke, John (1690), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 1 (esp. Chapter 2), Book 2 (esp. Chapters 1, 2, 8 and 14), Book 4 (esp. Chapter 11)

Plato, *Meno*, from 81e

Russell, Bertrand (1912), *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapters 1, 2

Trotter Cockburn, Catharine (1732), (attrib) 'A Letter from an anonymous writer to the author of the Minute Philosopher' Appendix to G Berkeley Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained

Zagzebski, Linda (1999), 'What is Knowledge?' in John Greco & Ernest Sosa (eds.), The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology 92–116

## 3.2 Moral philosophy

### 3.2.1 Normative ethical theories

- The meaning of good, bad, right, wrong within each of the three approaches specified below.
- Similarities and differences across the three approaches specified below.

#### Utilitarianism

- The question of what is meant by 'utility' and 'maximising utility', including:
  - Jeremy Bentham's quantitative hedonistic utilitarianism (his utility calculus)
  - John Stuart Mill's qualitative hedonistic utilitarianism (higher and lower pleasures) and his 'proof' of the greatest happiness principle
  - non-hedonistic utilitarianism (including preference utilitarianism)
- act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism.

Issues including:

- whether pleasure is the only good (Nozick's experience machine)
- fairness and individual liberty/rights (including the risk of the 'tyranny of the majority')
- problems with calculation (including which beings to include)
- issues around partiality
- whether utilitarianism ignores both the moral integrity and the intentions of the individual.

#### Kantian deontological ethics

- Immanuel Kant's account of what is meant by a 'good will'.
- The distinction between acting in accordance with duty and acting out of duty.
- The distinction between hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives.
- The first formulation of the categorical imperative (including the distinction between a contradiction in conception and a contradiction in will).
- The second formulation of the categorical imperative.

Issues including:

- clashing/competing duties
- not all universalisable maxims are distinctly moral; not all non-universalisable maxims are immoral
- the view that consequences of actions determine their moral value
- Kant ignores the value of certain motives, eg love, friendship, kindness
- morality is a system of hypothetical, rather than categorical, imperatives (Philippa Foot).

#### Aristotelian virtue ethics

- 'The good' for human beings: the meaning of Eudaimonia as the 'final end' and the relationship between Eudaimonia and pleasure.
- The function argument and the relationship between virtues and function.

- Aristotle's account of virtues and vices: virtues as character traits/dispositions; the role of education/habituation in the development of a moral character; the skill analogy; the importance of feelings; the doctrine of the mean and its application to particular virtues.
- Moral responsibility: voluntary, involuntary and non-voluntary actions.
- The relationship between virtues, actions and reasons and the role of practical reasoning/practical wisdom.

Issues including:

- whether Aristotelian virtue ethics can give sufficiently clear guidance about how to act
- clashing/competing virtues
- the possibility of circularity involved in defining virtuous acts and virtuous persons in terms of each other
- whether a trait must contribute to Eudaimonia in order to be a virtue; the relationship between the good for the individual and moral good.

### 3.2.2 Applied ethics

Students must be able to apply the content of [Normative ethical theories](#) (page 13) and [Meta-ethics](#) (page 14) to the following issues:

- stealing
- simulated killing (within computer games, plays, films etc)
- eating animals
- telling lies.

### 3.2.3 Meta-ethics

The origins of moral principles: reason, emotion/attitudes, or society.

The distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism about ethical language.

#### Moral realism

There are mind-independent moral properties/facts.

- Moral naturalism (cognitivist) – including naturalist forms of utilitarianism (including Bentham) and of virtue ethics.
- Moral non-naturalism (cognitivist) – including intuitionism and Moore's 'open question argument' against all reductive metaethical theories and the Naturalistic Fallacy.

Issues that may arise for the theories above, including:

- Hume's Fork and A J Ayer's verification principle
- Hume's argument that moral judgements are not beliefs since beliefs alone could not motivate us
- Hume's is-ought gap
- John Mackie's argument from relativity and his arguments from queerness.

#### Moral anti-realism

There are no mind-independent moral properties/facts.

- error theory (cognitivist) - Mackie
- emotivism (non-cognitivist) – Ayer
- prescriptivism (non-cognitivist) – Richard Hare.

Issues that may arise for the theories above, including:

- whether anti-realism can account for how we use moral language, including moral reasoning, persuading, disagreeing etc.
- the problem of accounting for moral progress
- whether anti-realism becomes moral nihilism.

## Set texts

Annas, Julia (2006), 'Virtue Ethics', in David Copp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 515–536)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Books 1 (1–5, 7–10, 13), 2 (1–7), 3 (1–5), 5, 6 (1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13), 7 (12–13), 10 (1–8)

Ayer, Alfred J (1973/1991), *The Central Questions of Philosophy*, London, Penguin, 22–29 and Ayer, A J (1946), *Language, Truth and Logic*, 2nd Edition, New York, Dover, (esp. Chapters 1 and 6)

Bentham, Jeremy (1789), *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press. Chapter 1 (The Principle of Utility) and Chapter 4 (Measuring Pleasure and Pain)

Diamond, Cora (1978), 'Eating Meat and Eating People' *Philosophy* 53: 465–479

Foot, Philippa (1972), 'Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives.' *Philosophical Review*, vol 81, issue 3, 305–316.

Hare, Richard M (1952) *The Language of Morals*, Chapters 1, 5, 7, 10.2

Hume, David (1739–40), *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part 1

Kant, Immanuel (1785), *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Chapters 1 and 2

Mackie, John L (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin, Chapter 1, Sections 8 and 9

Mill, John Stuart (1863), *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5

Moore, George E (1903), *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, Sections 6–14

Smart, Jack J C & Williams, Bernard (1973), *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Chapter 2 (Act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism) and Chapter 3 (Hedonistic and non-hedonistic utilitarianism)





# 4 Scheme of assessment

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Find past papers and mark schemes, and specimen papers for new courses, on our website at [aqa.org.uk/pastpapers](http://aqa.org.uk/pastpapers)

This specification is designed to be taken over one or two years.

This is a linear qualification. In order to achieve the award, students must complete all assessments at the end of the course and in the same series.

AS exams and certification for this specification are available for the first time in May/June 2018 and then every May/June for the life of the specification.

All materials are available in English only.

Our AS exams in Philosophy include questions that allow students to demonstrate their ability to:

- draw together their understanding of philosophical concepts, theories and methods, introduced in Epistemology and then developed across the full course of study
- show their understanding of the nature of knowledge claims across the topics and the kinds of arguments which support those claims.

## 4.1 Aims

Courses based on this specification must ensure that students:

- consider and develop an understanding of the ways in which philosophers have engaged with traditional philosophical issues and philosophical approaches to problems, through the detailed study of the arguments of philosophers in identified texts.
- develop an understanding of the core concepts of philosophy and begin to develop their own skill of conceptual analysis, through the study of the ways in which philosophers have analysed concepts and have, through conceptual analysis, identified subtle differences which have a wider impact on philosophical arguments.
- develop their ability to identify argument forms, and analyse and evaluate arguments appropriately, through the study of the ways in which philosophers have analysed and evaluated the soundness of arguments by considering the validity of the argument and/or the truth of the premises.
- develop and refine their ability to identify and distinguish argument within a source/text, ask thoughtful, relevant and penetrating questions; analyse and evaluate arguments of others, and present and defend their own arguments clearly, logically and cogently.
- develop and refine their writing skills, demonstrating the ability to be precise, concise and accurate, correctly using the technical vocabulary of philosophy.

## 4.2 Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all AS Philosophy specifications and all exam boards.

The exams will measure how students have achieved the following assessment objectives.

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the core concepts and methods of philosophy, including through the use of philosophical analysis.
- AO2: Analyse and evaluate philosophical arguments to form reasoned judgements.

#### 4.2.1 Assessment objective weightings for AS Philosophy

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Component weightings (approx %)	Overall weighting (approx %)
	Paper 1	
AO1	80	80
AO2	20	20
Overall weighting of components	100	100

### 4.3 Assessment weightings

The marks awarded on the papers will be scaled to meet the weighting of the components. Students' final marks will be calculated by adding together the scaled marks for each component. Grade boundaries will be set using this total scaled mark. The scaling and total scaled marks are shown in the table below.

Component	Maximum raw mark	Scaling factor	Maximum scaled mark
Epistemology and moral philosophy	80	x1	80
Total scaled mark:			80

# 5 General administration

You can find information about all aspects of administration, as well as all the forms you need, at [aqa.org.uk/examsadmin](http://aqa.org.uk/examsadmin)

## 5.1 Entries and codes

You only need to make one entry for each qualification – this will cover all the question papers, non-exam assessment and certification.

Every specification is given a national discount (classification) code by the Department for Education (DfE), which indicates its subject area.

If a student takes two specifications with the same discount code, further and higher education providers are likely to take the view that they have only achieved one of the two qualifications. Please check this before your students start their course.

Qualification title	AQA entry code	DfE discount code
AQA Advanced Subsidiary GCE in Philosophy	7171	14-16: DE1, post-16: 4790

This specification complies with:

- Ofqual *General conditions of recognition* that apply to all regulated qualifications
- Ofqual GCE qualification level conditions that apply to all GCEs
- Ofqual GCE subject level conditions that apply to all GCEs in this subject
- all other relevant regulatory documents.

The Ofqual qualification accreditation number (QAN) is 603/0685/3.

## 5.2 Overlaps with other qualifications

There is overlapping content in the AS and A-level Philosophy specifications. This helps you teach the AS and A-level together.

## 5.3 Awarding grades and reporting results

The AS qualification will be graded on a five-point scale: A, B, C, D and E.

Students who fail to reach the minimum standard for grade E will be recorded as U (unclassified) and will not receive a qualification certificate.

## 5.4 Re-sits and shelf life

Students can re-sit the qualification as many times as they wish, within the shelf life of the qualification.

## 5.5 Previous learning and prerequisites

There are no previous learning requirements. Any requirements for entry to a course based on this specification are at the discretion of schools and colleges.

## 5.6 Access to assessment: diversity and inclusion

General qualifications are designed to prepare students for a wide range of occupations and further study. Therefore our qualifications must assess a wide range of competences.

The subject criteria have been assessed to see if any of the skills or knowledge required present any possible difficulty to any students, whatever their ethnic background, religion, sex, age, disability or sexuality. Tests of specific competences were only included if they were important to the subject.

As members of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) we participate in the production of the JCQ document *Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments: General and Vocational qualifications*. We follow these guidelines when assessing the needs of individual students who may require an access arrangement or reasonable adjustment. This document is published at [jcq.org.uk](http://jcq.org.uk)

### 5.6.1 Students with disabilities and special needs

We're required by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove or lessen any disadvantage that affects a disabled student.

We can make arrangements for disabled students and students with special needs to help them access the assessments, as long as the competences being tested aren't changed. Access arrangements must be agreed **before** the assessment. For example, a Braille paper would be a reasonable adjustment for a Braille reader.

To arrange access arrangements or reasonable adjustments, you can apply using the online service at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

### 5.6.2 Special consideration

We can give special consideration to students who have been disadvantaged at the time of the assessment through no fault of their own – for example a temporary illness, injury or serious problem such as family bereavement. We can only do this **after** the assessment.

Your exams officer should apply online for special consideration at [aqa.org.uk/eaqa](http://aqa.org.uk/eaqa)

For more information and advice visit [aqa.org.uk/access](http://aqa.org.uk/access) or email [accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk](mailto:accessarrangementsqueries@aqa.org.uk)

## 5.7 Working with AQA for the first time

If your school or college hasn't previously offered our specifications, you need to register as an AQA centre. Find out how at [aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre](http://aqa.org.uk/becomeacentre)

## 5.8 Private candidates

This specification is available to private candidates.

A private candidate is someone who enters for exams through an AQA approved school or college but is not enrolled as a student there.

A private candidate may be self-taught, home schooled or have private tuition, either with a tutor or through a distance learning organisation. They must be based in the UK.

If you have any queries as a private candidate, you can:

- speak to the exams officer at the school or college where you intend to take your exams
- visit our website at [aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates](http://aqa.org.uk/privatecandidates)
- email [privatecandidates@aqa.org.uk](mailto:privatecandidates@aqa.org.uk)

## Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/7171](https://www.aqa.org.uk/7171)

You can talk directly to the Philosophy subject team:

E: [philosophy@aca.org.uk](mailto:philosophy@aca.org.uk)

T: 01483 477 822