

EXAMINERS' REPORT

IM PHILOSOPHY

FIRST SESSION 2018



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**

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Part 1: Statistical Information

Table 1 shows the distribution of the candidates' grades for the May 2018 Intermediate Level Philosophy Examination.

Table 1:

GRADE	A	B	C	D	E	F	ABS	TOTAL
NUMBER	30	30	79	48	34	54	16	291
% OF TOTAL	10.3	10.3	27.1	16.5	11.7	18.6	5.5	100

Part 2: Comments on the candidate's performance

Section A: Logic and Reasoning (Questions 1, 2, 3, 4)

Question 1

- a) A substantial number of candidates answered this question correctly.
- b) Most candidates were able to construct the truth-tables correctly however some of them had difficulty in finding the respective counter-interpretations.

Question 2

- a) Most candidates managed to answer this question correctly. They were able to identify the required junctors in the proposition given.
- b) Most candidates were able to construct truth-tables correctly however some of them found difficulty in finding their respective counter-interpretations.
- c) A substantial number of candidates answered this question correctly. However, some candidates showed difficulty in providing a good answer to the distributivity of the adjuncor over the conjunctor.

Question 3

- a) The majority of candidates performed well in this question and got full marks.
- b) A substantial number of candidates performed well in this question and did identify that the fallacy was an ad hominem one, in which the person is attacked instead of the argument.
- c) Some students found it hard to define what an 'argument from ignorance' is. However, most of them gave a good example of it.

Question 4

- a) Most candidates performed well in this question, showing a good understanding when it came to translate symbolically the statements given.
- b) Most students were able to construct truth-tables correctly however some of them found difficulty in finding their respective counter-interpretations. Moreover, as for the second part of the question, many students included an elementary proposition 'c' in their truth-table. This proposition was composed of only two elementary propositions. Thus, the resulting answer from these truth-tables was incorrect.

Section B: Ethics and Society (Compulsory Question 5)

In this essay, candidates were requested to explore and discuss the concepts of voluntary and non-voluntary active euthanasia and also discuss and explore the differences of voluntary and non-voluntary passive euthanasia. The majority succeeded in meeting the required information and details to answer and discuss these concepts.

Furthermore candidates were expected to mention and discuss the issue of physician assisted suicide. This part of the question carried the most marks and some candidates managed to discuss this issue in detail. Others did not look into it in detail and just gave a very generic answer. There were only a few candidates who failed to mention or just mentioned the term without explaining or showing their understanding about physician assisted suicide.

Most candidates stopped short when it came to explaining the terms of passive and active euthanasia and physician assisted suicide. They did not apply any moral theory or delve into the debate on the right to die. It appears that candidates found it challenging to present and form a critical analysis on the subject.

Section B: Ethics and Society (Questions 6 –8)

Question 6

Only a few candidates attempted this question. Most of the responses tackled the subject in a generic manner, offering an overview of how people use the internet instead of focusing on the ethical dimension of internet use. Although specifically requested in the question, many of the answers failed to apply ethical theories like Utilitarianism, Contractarianism, Moral Duty, or Natural Law and explore how these theories can allow for an improved and more positive use of the internet. A few responses were of a high quality and not only applied ethical theory but also illustrated some general attitudes towards technology - like technology as an iron cage, technology as neutral (or utopian) and technological realism.

Question 7

The majority of candidates opted for this essay question. Most of the responses successfully identified the element of 'man as a rational animal' and successfully analysed the characteristics of this element. Unfortunately most candidates only explored this on the level of distinguishing humans as rational beings as opposed to 'sensible' or 'vegetative beings'. Few responses used Aristotle's definition as an actual premise to build a claim and logical sequence of how rationality forms the basis of a virtuous life. Only a few essays were coherent, well-argued and offered a logical sound argument. Too many essays were based on memory only and therefore, although the content was correct, the element of higher order thinking and reflection was weak.

Question 8

This was the second most popular choice among candidates. However, only few of the responses showed a deep understanding of the ethical theories referred to in the question. A number of answers were formulated in terms of a discussion on how ethical debates should be tackled in a generic manner, without any reference to actual theories or theoretical discourse. Although many responses identified Kantian ethics and Utilitarianism as the theoretical schools required by the question, they failed to build a coherent and structured argument and analysis. Many responses also failed to use the correct terminology, therefore failing to correctly use terms like 'deontology', 'intrinsic value' or 'an end in itself'. A number of answers inaccurately defined and explained the formulations of the categorical imperative. Many candidates showed a better understanding of the principle of utility.

General Remarks

Overall, the majority of candidates fared well and showed a sound level of philosophical knowledge. However, the standard of language used was generally poor. Most candidates lacked the necessary stylistic skills in their responses. Appropriate philosophical language and terms are necessary to present a good philosophy essay. It was also noted that only a few of the answers had a logical sequence/ structure and some lacked a central claim. Essays were mostly descriptive, rather than argumentative, lacking the adequate content needed for 'doing philosophy'.

In the logic section, it must be stressed that candidates should read and follow the instructions carefully before answering the paper. There were cases in which candidates answered all questions in this section, when it is clearly stated that they should only answer three questions out of four.

Chairperson
Examiners' Panel 2018