

Assessment for the Philosophy Pathways, 2014-15

Each pathway module is assessed as follows:

Block 1

One essay, maximum 1,500 words, due by 12.00 (noon) on Monday of Week 7 of Autumn Term. Four essay questions will be made available to students on the VLE on Monday of Week 2.

Block 2

One 1-hour examination held in the Spring Term Common Assessment Period (Week 1). Students will be required to answer *one* question from a choice of four. Four mock questions will be made available to students on the VLE on the first Monday of the Block.

Block 3

One essay, maximum 1,500 words, due by 12.00 (noon) on Monday of Week 7 of Spring Term. Four essay questions will be made available to students on the VLE on Monday of Week 2.

Block 4

One 1-hour examination held in the Summer Term Common Assessment Period (Week 7). Students will be required to answer *one* question from a choice of four. Four mock questions will be made available to students on the VLE on the first Monday of the Block.

All essays are to be submitted online via the VLE. Instructions will be provided for this.

We aim to provide marks and feedback on pathway assessments within four weeks of the date of submission, and certainly within the University's six-week deadline.

Module Marks

The final mark for the module will be a weighted average of the four component marks, using a 30-30-30-10 weighting, with the lowest scoring of your four components counting for 10% of the final mark. Thus, for example, if a student receives the following four marks: Block 1: 73%, Block 2: 57%, Block 3: 75%, Block 4: 68%, their final mark for the module will be calculated as follows:

$$(0.3 \times 73) + (0.1 \times 57) + (0.3 \times 75) + (0.3 \times 68) = 21.9 + 5.7 + 22.5 + 20.4 = 70.5\%$$

In this way, an uncharacteristically poor performance in one component is compensated for by its receiving a lower weighting.

Essay/Exam Guidance

As with all philosophy assessments, high marks are achieved by presenting a well-argued case for the answer to the question you favour. In closed examinations, where time is at a premium, you should avoid lengthy introductions—restrict introductory material to a brief (preferably one-sentence) outline of your response and essential points of clarification. One key way to achieve higher marks is to lay out a case for your favoured answer and then detail the strongest available objections to that case and respond to them. For more detailed guidance, see the grade descriptors below and ‘Writing Philosophy Essays’ on the departmental website: www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/undergraduate/essays

Please note that while pathway tutors will make time available in the run up to assessments for you to discuss your preparation for essays/exams, including answering specific questions and discussing general ideas, they cannot comment on written drafts or plans, so please do not ask them to do so!

Department of Philosophy Grade Descriptors

The following is an excerpt from the Philosophy Department's statement of grade descriptors for essays and essay answers in closed examinations. For the full statement, which includes explanations of the key terms, see:

www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/undergraduate/assessment

Essays are evaluated along four dimensions: understanding, argument, organisation, and writing. These dimensions can be differently weighted depending on the question answered. The descriptors for different classes are given below. The descriptors are accompanied by explanations of the dimensions of evaluation, differences between assessed essays and unseen exams, how marks for multi-part assessments are calculated, and the marking scale. For further information, see the VLE site 'Understanding Marking' (part of the optional material in the online 'Beginning Philosophy' module).

Mark Band	Descriptor
80–100	Exceptional work that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">— demonstrates an exceptionally sophisticated understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments— provides an exceptionally sophisticated answer to the question that contains detailed argument that demonstrates evidence of original thought— contains material that is exceptionally well selected and organised— is exceptionally well written
70–79	Excellent work that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">— demonstrates an excellent understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments— provides an excellent answer to the question that contains detailed argument that demonstrates evidence of independent thought— contains material that is very well selected and organised— is very well written
60–69	Good work that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">— demonstrates a good understanding of the relevant philosophical

	<p>concepts, problems, theories, and arguments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — provides a good answer to the question that contains detailed argument — contains material that is well selected and organised — is well written
50-59	<p>Satisfactory work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — demonstrates some understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments — goes some way towards answering the question and contains some argument — contains material that is relevant and is reasonably well organised — is written in a satisfactory manner
40-49	<p>Adequate work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — demonstrates some understanding of some of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments — goes some way towards answering the question but contains little or no argument — contains some material that is relevant and is adequately organised — is written in a minimally competent manner
0-39	<p>Inadequate work that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — demonstrates little or no understanding of the relevant philosophical concepts, problems, theories, and arguments — makes little or no attempt to answer the question and contains little or no argument — contains material that is badly selected and badly organised