

Markscheme

May 2026

Philosophy

Higher level

Paper 3

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How to use the Diploma Programme Philosophy markscheme

The assessment markbands constitute the formal tool for marking examination scripts, and in these assessment markbands examiners can see the skills being assessed in the examinations. The markschemes are designed to assist examiners in possible routes taken by students in terms of the content of their answers when demonstrating their skills of doing philosophy through their responses. The points listed are not compulsory points, and not necessarily the best possible points. They are a framework to help examiners contextualize the requirements of the question, and to facilitate the application of marks according to the assessment markbands listed on page 4.

It is important that examiners understand that the main idea of the course is to promote *doing* philosophy, and this involves activity and engagement throughout a two-year programme, as opposed to emphasizing the chance to display knowledge in a terminal set of examination papers. Even in the examinations, responses should not be assessed on how much students *know* as much as how they are able to use their knowledge in support of an argument, using the skills referred to in the various assessment markbands published in the subject guide, reflecting an engagement with philosophical activity throughout the course. As a tool intended to help examiners in assessing responses, the following points should be kept in mind when using a markscheme:

- The Diploma Programme Philosophy course is designed to encourage the skills of *doing* philosophy in the students. These skills can be accessed through reading the assessment markbands in the subject guide
- The markscheme does not intend to outline a model/correct answer
- The markscheme has an introductory paragraph which contextualizes the emphasis of the question being asked
- The bullet points below the paragraph are suggested possible points of development that should *not* be considered a prescriptive list but rather an indicative list where they might appear in the answer
- If there are names of philosophers and references to their work incorporated into the markscheme, this should help to give context for the examiners and does *not* reflect a requirement that such philosophers and references should appear in an answer: They are possible lines of development.
- Students can legitimately select from a wide range of ideas, arguments and concepts in service of the question they are answering, and it is possible that students will use material effectively that is *not* mentioned in the markscheme
- Examiners should be aware of the command terms for Philosophy as published in the Philosophy subject guide when assessing responses
- In markschemes for Paper 3, there are suggested pertinent points found in the text extract relating to philosophical activity. The markschemes include suggested questions that might stimulate analysis of those points. It is not intended that all possible points raised by the text are to be covered by the students. The markbands direct examiners to rewarding the responses accordingly
- The markscheme bullet points cannot and are not intended to predict how a student will relate his or her personal experience of the DP HL Philosophy course to the text extract, so the examiner must be aware that much of the response of the student will *not* be covered by material in the markscheme; but the student's response must relate to the text extract
- Responses for part A and part B should be assessed using the distinct assessment markbands.

Paper 3 part A markbands

This task requires students 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. Students must answer both part A and part B of the question. Part A requires students to explain a specified concept, issue or argument from the unseen text. It is expected that students 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.

Paper 3 part B markbands

Part B picks out a feature of the nature, function, meaning or methodology of philosophy highlighted by the unseen text, and asks students to engage in a critical discussion of how this feature impacts the usefulness of philosophy in helping us to engage with pressing issues. Students 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 student'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 student's personal experience of 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 student'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 student'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 student'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.

Unseen text – philosophy and contemporary issues

- (a) **With reference to the text and your own knowledge, explain how culture shapes and is shaped by technology.** [10]

This unseen text focuses on the impact of technologies on individuals and societies, a key issue within the philosophy of technology. Specifically, the text explores how technology both shapes and is shaped by cultural systems, which aligns with prescribed content such as the role of technology in shaping society and individuals. In this 10-mark Part A question, students are required to explain how cultural diversity impacts technological innovation. Students are not asked to engage in critical discussion but to focus on explaining Quintanilla’s idea that technology is culturally sensitive and imposes certain restrictions on the rest of culture, as signalled by the “explain” command term.

Responses should include specific and explicit references to the text. For example, students could make reference to:

- Quintanilla’s perspective on technological inflexibility which is described as a barrier to adapting technologies across different societies.
- The crucial role of tolerance for democracy and technological development, and its rational limits.
- Quintanilla’s position that the success of technology transfer depends on respecting cultural diversity.
- The interpretive flexibility of technologies that allows different social groups evaluate and modify technical systems according to their cultural contexts.
- How cultural diversity can enhance creativity and technological innovation but that certain cultural features may not be compatible with specific technical systems.
- Quintanilla’s observation that technological development requires tolerance towards cultural diversity and a willingness to integrate elements from other cultures into technological systems.

Responses should also include explicit reference to students’ own wider knowledge of the relationship between societies and technology. For example, students might include reference to:

- Concepts of tolerance, including religious, moral and cultural tolerance and how these might relate to technology
- Bunge’s idea that technology is a means of transforming the world according to human needs where the social impact of this transformation must be critically evaluated.
- Heidegger’s concept of *Gestell* (Enframing), which argues that technology changes the way humans relate to the world, transforming nature into a resource to be exploited.
- Ellul’s perspective on technological determinism, which suggests that once technological systems are in place, they tend to shape social values and norms independently of human intentions.
- How technological artefacts embody both technical and cultural values, affecting how societies function and interact.
- Marcuse’s idea of one-dimensional man and how advanced industrial technology can shape human consciousness, limiting the capacity for critical thought and creativity in society
- Floridi’s concept of the infosphere, where the rise of information and communication technologies fundamentally alters the way society interacts with knowledge and the environment.
- Jonas’s ethics of responsibility regarding the development and implementation of new technologies, particularly concerning the protection of future generations and the environment.

- (b) **With reference to the text and your own experience of doing philosophy, discuss the claim that philosophy serves as a tool for understanding how culture shapes and is shaped by technology.**

[15]

This question invites discussion of the claim that philosophy serves as a tool for understanding how culture shapes and is shaped by technology. Students are required to explicitly make reference to both the unseen text and their personal experiences of engaging in philosophical activity. It should be noted that in this 15-mark part B question, students are required to engage in critical discussion and evaluation, signalled by the use of the “discuss” command term.

Students might explore:

- How technology is often developed and implemented in ways that reflect specific cultural values and biases (e.g. critical theory or postcolonial theory).
- Historical development of technologies and how they have been shaped by the cultural contexts in which they were created
- How technology can impose a certain way of thinking that may exclude alternative cultural perspectives (The idea of *Gestell* in Heidegger’s philosophy).
- How technologies can influence social structures and cultural norms, challenging the notion of neutrality (Technological determinism).
- Cultural biases or inequalities, such as facial recognition software and its issues with racial profiling.
- How incorporating diverse philosophical perspectives can challenge the dominant narratives surrounding technology and its development.
- Ethical dimensions of technology, including issues of access and equity, cultural sensitivity, exploitation, and the imposition of values.
- The potential future impact of emerging technologies, like AI and biotechnology, on different cultures.

Responses should include specific and explicit references to the text. For example, students could make reference to:

- How technology is influenced by the culture in which it operates.
- The role of human agents who bring cultural knowledge and values into the operation of technological systems, emphasizing that technology is not developed in a vacuum.
- How different social groups assess and modify technologies based on their cultural backgrounds.
- How cultural diversity can drive technological creativity and how innovation can be used to argue against the notion that technology is universally applicable.
- That certain cultural features may conflict with specific technical systems by virtue of their beliefs, values, or outlook, and that this may cause difficulties for resistance.
- The importance of considering cultural values in the development and implementation of technology.

Responses should also include explicit references to students’ personal experiences of engaging in philosophical activity. For example, students might reflect on:

- Personal reflections on technology as a transformative force in society and its cultural implications.
 - The relationship between technology and human existence in their own lives.
 - Classroom discussions on the cultural impact of technology.
 - Reflections on their own experience of social media, confronting ethical dilemmas such as privacy, authenticity, and digital behaviour.
 - Perspectives on the integration of technology and culture in everyday experiences.
 - Real-life ethical dilemmas involving technology.
 - How digital tools have shaped their engagement with philosophical texts.
 - Thoughts about the future of technology and society.
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