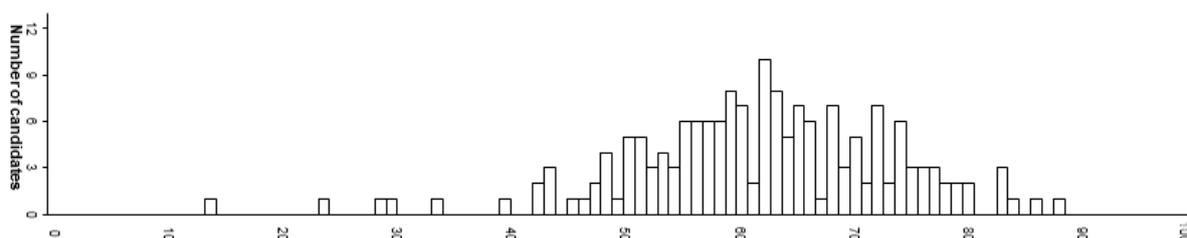




## Summary report for candidates on the 2015 WACE examination in Philosophy and Ethics Stage 3

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2015	171	3
2014	143	3
2013	167	4

### Examination score distribution - Written



### Summary

The examination paper for 2015 seemed to be well designed and effective in giving all candidates the opportunity to demonstrate what they had learned while providing a means by which to discriminate between different ability. The length of the examination was appropriate for the three-hour time frame and the level of difficulty of the paper was comparable to that of the previous year's paper as the overall mean, and section means demonstrate. The cohort of candidates in 2015 demonstrated a range of ability similar to that of previous examinations.

The mean of the paper was 62.09%, which was very close to the mean of the previous year's examination 61.59%. The examination seemed to function as a good discriminator, where the minimum mark for the examination was 14.00% and the maximum mark was 88.50%. The standard deviation for the examination was 11.78%.

Attempted by 171 Candidates Mean 62.09% Max 88.50 Min 14.00

Section means were:

Section One: Reasoning and inquiry skills

Mean 19.28% (/30) Max 27.00% Min 8.00%

Section Two: Philosophical analysis

Mean 25.46% (/40) Max 38.50% Min 2.00%

Section Three: Extended argument

Mean 17.82% (/30) Max 27.00% Min 2.00%

### General comments

As in 2014, section one and section three of the examination appeared to be the most challenging for candidates, with some questions (for example, Question 2(d), Question 3(b), Question 7) in section one posing particular challenges. This section required a deep and broad understanding of critical reasoning. In section two, neither item stood out as particularly difficult and many candidates provided detailed critical analysis. In section three, candidates could choose from five questions. Questions 11, 12, 14 and 15 appeared to be of a comparable level of difficulty attaining relatively similar means. Question 13 appeared to be the easiest question with a noticeably higher mean, however, the number of attempts at this question was only four and the level at which the candidates who chose this question

engaged with the issues was highly sophisticated, so I think it would be presumptuous to conclude that the question was easier. The number of candidates who attempted each question in this section (ranging from four to 75), made it difficult to gauge the comparative level of difficulty of each item.

#### *Advice for candidates*

##### Section One:

- You need a thorough understanding of the meaning of the connectives (if/then, and, or etc.) for tackling this section of the examination. This includes a clear grasp of how the conditional is used to express necessary and sufficient conditions.
- You are advised to understand clearly the difference between each of the fallacies in the course and to identify the examples correctly.
- Focus on a clear grasp of the causal fallacies.
- Always check your work thoroughly if you have time.

##### Section Two

- Be very careful not to write too much and thus compromise your performance elsewhere in the examination (typically Section Three).
- Succinct analyses are far better than lengthy descriptions.
- You are encouraged to summarise the argument in the passage accurately and succinctly.
- Lists of statements (premises and conclusion) are encouraged but should not be a rewording of the passage verbatim. Instead you are required to paraphrase the argument in the passage into a list of statements that is a succinct and accurate representation of the argument in the passage.
- Lengthy and verbatim descriptive recounts of the argument in the passage must be avoided.

##### Section Three

- Inadequate time management contributes to poor performance and there appears to be a pattern of poor performance where too much time and effort is put into Section Two, and little time is left for Section Three.

### **Comments on specific sections and questions**

#### **Section One:** Reasoning and inquiry skills

Attempted by 170 Candidates      Mean 19.28(/30)      Max 27      Min 8

Section One contained some items that typically challenged candidates. The section contained similar items to 2014, and it was pleasing to see results that demonstrate that there are ongoing improvements in performance with regard to the nature of the items. This indicates that issues with the candidates' understanding of certain areas of critical thinking continue to be addressed in many schools.

#### **Section Two:** Philosophical analysis

Attempted by 170 Candidates      Mean 25.46(/40)      Max 38.5      Min 2

The range of performance on the passage analysis was typical. As with the dialogue, the length of responses had an impact on the markers. Generally candidates were far more succinct and targeted (e.g. three pages maximum) with their analysis and evaluation. Candidates also engaged better with the elements of cogency (statement acceptability and inferential strength) than in the past, but there is still room to improve.

#### **Section Three:** Extended argument

Attempted by 169 Candidates      Mean 17.82(/30)      Max 27      Min 2

Section Three was similar to previous trends of performance on this section in the paper. There were candidates who planned/constructed an argument exhibiting a strong performance on the criteria in the marking key and executed a commendable response to the question.