



## SAMPLE ASSESSMENT TASKS

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PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS  
ATAR YEAR 12

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## Sample assessment task

### Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12

#### Task 6 – Unit 4

**Assessment type:** Critical reasoning

**Conditions**

Time for the task: 40 minutes under standard test conditions

**Task weighting**

10% of the school mark for this pair of units

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1. Madeline is either my friend or my enemy, and a friend of mine would never refuse to share her lunch with me like she does. Madeline must be my enemy.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)
- (b) Name the fallacy. (1 mark)
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2. Legalised euthanasia is state-sanctioned murder. So, if a person euthanises another person, then he/she has committed a murder.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)
- (b) Name the fallacy. (1 mark)
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3. Jack is a cat, because all cats are mammals, and Jack is a mammal.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)
- (b) Name the fallacy. (1 mark)
-

4. Are the following statements analytic or synthetic?

- There is water on the Moon. (1 mark)
- 

- Avocados contain saturated fat. (1 mark)
- 

- A pentagon is a polygon with five angles and five sides. (1 mark)
- 

5. Express the following sentence as a conditional (if X, then Y) statement.

- (a) Cricket balls are either red or they are white. (1 mark)
- 
- 

- (b) You cannot buy alcohol unless you are 18 years of age or over.  
Underline the sentence below that means the same as the above sentence. (1 mark)

- (i) Being 18 years of age or over is sufficient for being able to buy alcohol.
- (ii) Being 18 years of age or over is necessary for being able to buy alcohol.

- (c) A person can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club only if he or she is at least 16 years old.  
Underline the sentence below that is logically equivalent to the above sentence. (1 mark)

- (i) If a person is at least 16 years old, then he or she can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club.
- (ii) If a person can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club, then he or she is at least 16 years old.

6. I cannot doubt the existence of my conscious experiences, but I can doubt the existence of my brain processes. My brain processes are located in space, but my conscious experiences are not, so they cannot be brain processes.

For the above argument:

- (a) Bracket and number the separable statements. (1 mark)
- (b) Write down **in full** and number the separable statements in the order in which they occur. (3 marks)

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7. Interest rates will probably stay low for the next six months, because the strong Australian dollar is doing some of the work that raising interest rates would normally do, so the inflation rate is remaining steady. Also, keeping interest rates low encourages international investment in Australia.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion. (1 mark)
- (b) Bracket and number the separable statements. (1 mark)
- (c) Use the numbers you have given each separable statement to create a diagram of the argument. (2 marks)

8. Every widely recognised ethical theory can be used to justify some instances of torture. If some instances of torture can be justified within every widely recognised ethical theory, then we either need to adjust our ethical theories or we should abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture. Thus, we either need to adjust our ethical theories or abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture. We should trust our intuitions about the wrongness of torture, so we need to adjust our ethical theories.

For the above argument:

- (a) Bracket and number each proposition in the order it occurs in the argument. (1 mark)
- (b) Circle the inference indicators. (1 mark)
- (c) Circle the word below that **best** describes the strength of the inference. (1 mark)
- Weak                      Moderate                      Strong
- (d) Use the numbers you have given each proposition to create a diagram of the argument. (3 marks)

9. In answering parts (a) and (b) of the following question, assume that this argument is given as part of a news report from a reputable and trustworthy source.

We have reason to believe that if the missing ship is not somewhere in Vietnam, then it is somewhere in the Southern Indian Ocean. There is good evidence that the ship is somewhere in the Southern Indian Ocean, so it is not somewhere in Vietnam.

For the above argument:

- (a) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer. (1 mark)
- Cogent                      Not cogent

(b) Justify your evaluation of the cogency of the argument.

(3 marks)

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**Total = 30 marks**

## Marking key for sample assessment task 6 – Unit 4

1. Madeline is either my friend or my enemy, and a friend of mine would never refuse to share her lunch with me like she does. Madeline must be my enemy.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion.

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined (see above).	1

- (b) Name the fallacy.

Description	Marks
False dichotomy, <b>or</b> fallacy of false alternatives	1

2. Legalised euthanasia is state-sanctioned murder. So, if a person euthanises another person, then he/she has committed a murder.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion.

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined (see above).	1

- (b) Name the fallacy.

Description	Marks
Begging the question, <b>or</b> circular reasoning	1

3. Jack is a cat, because all cats are mammals, and Jack is a mammal.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion.

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined (see above).	1

- (b) Name the fallacy.

Description	Marks
Non-sequitur <b>or</b> logical non-sequitur, <b>or</b> fallacy of the undistributed middle term, <b>or</b> affirming the consequent	1



4. Are the following statements analytic or synthetic?

- There is water on the Moon.
- Avocados contain saturated fat.
- A pentagon is a polygon with five angles and five sides.

Answer	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• synthetic</li> <li>• synthetic</li> <li>• analytic</li> </ul>	1–3 (1 mark each)

5. Express the following sentence as a conditional (if X, then Y) statement.

(a) Cricket balls are either red or they are white.

Description	Marks
If a cricket ball is not red, then it is white. <b>or</b> If a cricket ball is not white, then it is red. <b>or</b> If it is a cricket ball, then it is red or white. <b>or</b> If it is not red or white, then it is not a cricket ball.	1

(b) You cannot buy alcohol unless you are 18 years of age or over.

Underline the sentence below that means the same as the above sentence.

- (i) Being 18 years of age or over is sufficient for being able to buy alcohol.
- (ii) Being 18 years of age or over is necessary for being able to buy alcohol.

Description	Marks
Sentence (ii) is underlined (see above).	1
Note: Any other method of indicating sentence (ii) is satisfactory, e.g. by circling the (ii), or by circling the whole sentence.	

(c) A person can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club only if he or she is at least 16 years old.

Underline the sentence below that is logically equivalent to the above sentence.

- (i) If a person is at least 16 years old, then he or she can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club.
- (ii) If a person can be a member of the Twilight Sailing Club, then he or she is at least 16 years old.

Description	Marks
Sentence (ii) is underlined (see above).	1
Note: Any other method of indicating sentence (ii) is satisfactory, e.g. by circling the (ii), or by circling the whole sentence.	

6. I cannot doubt the existence of my conscious experiences, but I can doubt the existence of my brain processes. My brain processes are located in space, but my conscious experiences are not, so they cannot be brain processes.

(1) <I cannot doubt the existence of my conscious experiences>, but (2) <I can doubt the existence of my brain processes>. (3) <My brain processes are located in space>, but (4) <my conscious experiences are not>, so (5) <they cannot be brain processes>.

For the above argument:

- (a) Bracket and number the separable statements.

Description	Marks
Brackets and numbers are placed in the exact locations as shown above.	1
Note: The statements can be numbered using any ordinal series, e.g. 1, 2, 3 or i, ii, iii.	

- (b) Write down **in full** and number the separable statements in the order in which they occur.

Description	Marks
(1) I cannot doubt the existence of my conscious experiences. (2) I can doubt the existence of my brain processes. (3) My brain processes are located in space. (All three statements must be provided and numbered for 1 mark.)	1
(4) My conscious experiences are not [located in space].	1
(5) My conscious experiences] cannot be brain processes.	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>

7. Interest rates will probably stay low for the next six months, because the strong Australian dollar is doing some of the work that raising interest rates would normally do, so the inflation rate is remaining steady. Also, keeping interest rates low encourages international investment in Australia.

(1) <Interest rates will probably stay low for the next six months,> because (2) <the strong Australian dollar is doing some of the work that raising interest rates would normally do> so (3) <the inflation rate is remaining steady>. Also, (4) <keeping interest rates low encourages international investment in Australia>.

For the above argument:

- (a) Underline the conclusion.

Description	Marks
The conclusion is underlined as shown above.	1

- (b) Bracket and number the separable statements.

Description	Marks
The four separable statements must be correctly bracketed and numbered (see above).	1
Note: The statements can be numbered using any ordinal series, e.g. 1, 2, 3 or i, ii, iii.	

- (c) Using the numbers you have given each separable statement, give a diagram of the argument.

Description	Marks
<pre> graph TD     2["(2)"] --&gt; 3["(3)"]     3 --&gt; 1["(1)"]     4["(4)"] --&gt; 1           </pre>	
The diagram shows sub-conclusion (3) and premise (4) converging to support the conclusion (1).	1
The diagram shows premise (2) supporting sub-conclusion (3).	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>Note: A different numbering system can be used. Any diagram which is relevantly similar to the one above can be correct.</p> <p>The conventions that need to be formally observed and applied correctly are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the arrow to represent a relationship of inference</li> <li>• the placement of the arrow exactly between the premise and the conclusion that are in the inferential relationship.</li> </ul>	

8. Every widely recognised ethical theory can be used to justify some instances of torture. If some instances of torture can be justified within every widely recognised ethical theory, then we either need to adjust our ethical theories or we should abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture. Thus, we either need to adjust our ethical theories or abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture. We should trust our intuitions about the wrongness of torture, so we need to adjust our ethical theories.

(1) <Every widely recognised ethical theory can be used to justify some instances of torture.>

(2) <If some instances of torture can be justified within every widely recognised ethical theory, then we either need to adjust our ethical theories or we should abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture.>

(3) <Thus, we either need to adjust our ethical theories or abandon our intuitions about the wrongness of torture.>

(4) <We should trust our intuitions about the wrongness of torture.>

(5) <so we need to adjust our ethical theories.>

For the above argument:

- (a) Bracket and number each proposition in the order it occurs in the argument.

Description	Marks
The five separable statements must be correctly bracketed and numbered (see above).	1
Students may number the statements using any ordinal series they choose, e.g. 1, 2, 3 or i, ii, iii.	

(b) Circle the inference indicators.

Description	Marks
The inference indicators are circled (see above).	1

(c) Circle the word below that **best** describes the strength of the inference.

Weak

Moderate

Strong

Description	Marks
Correctly circles the word that <b>best</b> describes the strength of the inference (see above)	1

(d) Using the numbers you have given each proposition, give a diagram of the argument.

Description	Marks
(1)       +       (2) ↓ (3)       +       (4) ↓ (5)	
The diagram shows premises (1) and (2) linked to support (3).	1
The diagram shows sub-conclusion (3) and premise (4) linked.	1
The diagram shows the conclusion (5).	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
A different numbering system can be used. Any diagram which is relevantly similar to the one above can be correct. The conventions that need to be formally observed and applied correctly are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the arrow to represent a relationship of inference</li> <li>• the placement of the arrow exactly between the premise and the conclusion that are in the inferential relationship.</li> </ul>	

9. In answering parts (a) and (b) of the following question, assume that this argument is given as part of a news report from a reputable and trustworthy source.

We have reason to believe that if the missing ship is not somewhere in Vietnam, then it is somewhere in the Southern Indian Ocean. There is good evidence that the ship is somewhere in the Southern Indian Ocean, so it is not somewhere in Vietnam.

For the above argument:

(a) Evaluate the cogency of the argument. Circle the correct answer.

Cogent
   
 Not Cogent

Description	Marks
Correct answer is circled (see above)	1

(b) Justify your evaluation of the cogency of the argument.

Description	Marks
Provides three points to justify the evaluation of the cogency of the argument	1–3 (1 mark for each point)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The answer could include any of the following:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The premises are acceptable as they are from a reputable source.</li> <li>• The first premise is acceptable, as we have been told that it is from a reputable source, so it is not a false dichotomy – these are the two most likely options.</li> <li>• The premises give strong, but not complete, support to the conclusion, as it is possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false.</li> <li>• The argument is of the general form of affirming the consequent, so it is not deductively valid.</li> <li>• The conditional first premise implies that, if the missing ship is in Vietnam, then it is not somewhere in the Southern Ocean, as we know that ships cannot be in two places at once. This implied premise would make the argument deductively valid.</li> <li>• The premises are acceptable and the support/inference strong, so the argument is cogent.</li> </ul>	

## Sample assessment task

### Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12

#### Task 3 – Unit 3

**Assessment type:** Philosophical analysis and evaluation (passage)

**Conditions**

Time for the task: 40 minutes in class under standard test conditions

**Task weighting**

7.5% of the school mark for this pair of units

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Summarise, clarify and critically evaluate the following passage.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau – The Sovereign**

[E]ach individual, as a man, may have a particular will contrary [opposite] or dissimilar to the general will which he has as a citizen. His particular interest may speak to him quite differently from the common interest: his absolute and naturally independent existence may make him look upon what he owes to the common cause as a gratuitous [voluntary] contribution, the loss of which will do less harm to others than the payment of it is burdensome [costly] to himself; and, regarding the moral person which constitutes the State as a *persona ficta* [artificial/fictional person], because not a man, he may wish to enjoy the rights of citizenship without being ready to fulfil the duties of a subject. The continuance of such an injustice could not but prove the undoing of the body politic [the State].

In order then that the social compact [contract] may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes [implies that] the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free ... this alone legitimises civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses.

Extract from: Rousseau, J. J. (1762). *The Social Contract*, Chapter 7 (public domain). Retrieved February 25, 2014, from [https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rousseau/jean\\_jacques/r864s/](https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/r/rousseau/jean_jacques/r864s/)

You will need to:

- summarise the argument (i.e. identify the topic and the conclusion/s) (2 marks)
- clarify the core concepts (3 marks)
- clarify the main arguments (i.e. identify the arguments and clarify the premises and inferences) (5 marks)
- evaluate the premises (i.e. identify the major premises and evaluate their acceptability, using illustrative examples) (4 marks)
- evaluate the inferences (i.e. identify the inferential moves and evaluate the inferential strength, using illustrative examples) (4 marks)
- assess the overall cogency of the argument. (2 marks)

**Total = 20 marks**

## Marking key for sample assessment task 3 – Unit 3

Description	Marks
<b>Summary</b>	
Identifies the topic	1
Identifies the main conclusions	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Clarification</b>	
<b>Concepts</b>	
Explains core concepts, using illustrative examples	3
Describes core concepts	2
States core concepts	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Arguments</b>	
Identifies the arguments in the texts and clarifies the premises and inferences	5
Identifies the arguments in the texts and clarifies some of the premises and inferences	4
Identifies the arguments in the texts and refers to some of the premises and inferences	3
Identifies the arguments in the texts	2
Identifies an argument or some arguments in the texts	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	
<b>Premises</b>	
Identifies the major premises and evaluates their acceptability, using illustrative examples	4
Identifies the major premises and evaluates their acceptability	3
Identifies the major premises and states their acceptability	2
Identifies some of the major premises	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Inferences</b>	
Identifies the inferential moves and evaluates inferential strength, using illustrative examples	4
Identifies the inferential moves and evaluates inferential strength	3
Identifies the inferential moves and makes some assertions about inferential strength	2
Identifies some inferential moves	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Cogency</b>	
Assesses the cogency of the argument based on their evaluation of premise acceptability and inferential strength	2
Makes assertions about cogency	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

## Sample assessment task

### Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12

#### Task 4 – Unit 3

**Assessment type:** Construction of argument

**Conditions**

Period allowed for completion of the task: two weeks (two periods in class and homework)

Task and guidelines issued prior to assist student research

One side of A4 notes is permitted (notes must be submitted after the in-class assessment)

Time for task: 50 minutes in-class assessment under standard test conditions

**Task weighting:** 10% of the school mark for this pair of units

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Choose **one** of the following propositions and argue **for or against** the statement.

- We all have a moral obligation to preserve the natural environment.

or

- There can be no common good if there is no social contract.

or

- The essence of a person is defined not by what lies within, but by what his/her society thinks of him/her.

or

- Liberal democracy is the only just form of government.

or

- The scientific method is the way to objective truth.

Construct an argument that displays independence of thought, originality, precision, consistency, relevance and cogency.

The task will be marked as follows:

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| • Philosophical understandings, using philosophical language and concepts | (10 marks) |
| • Philosophical arguments, using effective examples and counter-examples  | (15 marks) |
| • Clarity and structure.  | (5 marks)  |

**Total = 30 marks**



## Marking key for sample assessment task 4 – Unit 3

Description	Marks
<b>Philosophical understandings</b>	
Demonstrates a critical understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses sophisticated philosophical language and concepts	9–10
Demonstrates understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses appropriate language and concepts	7–8
Demonstrates an understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question and uses some appropriate philosophical language and concepts	5–6
Demonstrates some understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question	3–4
Demonstrates a limited understanding of philosophical topics relevant to the question	1–2
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Philosophical arguments</b>	
Constructs a relevant, cogent argument, which demonstrates originality, and a deep understanding of philosophical method (e.g. relies on plausible assumptions, demonstrates logical insight, effectively uses examples and counter-examples, where appropriate)	14–15
Constructs a relevant, cogent argument, which demonstrates a sound understanding of philosophical method	12–13
Constructs a relevant, moderately cogent argument, which demonstrates some understanding of philosophical method	10–11
Constructs a relevant, moderately cogent argument (e.g. may contain some errors in reasoning or fails to consider possible objections, where appropriate)	8–9
Constructs a relevant, weak argument (e.g. may make controversial assumptions, beg the question and/or commit some other serious errors of reasoning, such as informal or formal fallacies)	6–7
Constructs a weak argument that makes few relevant claims (e.g. commits several serious errors of reasoning, has tenuous/occasional links with the question)	4–5
Makes some claims relevant to the question but fails to construct any argument (e.g. merely makes assertions, merely discusses the thoughts of others)	2–3
Makes an assertion that may not address the question	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Clarity and structure</b>	
Writes with structure and clarity (e.g. clarifies key terms, sign-posts key steps of the argument, logically orders the topics)	4–5
Writes with some structure and some clarity	2–3
Writing is poorly structured and lacks clarity (e.g. does not clarify key terms, provides unclear argument structure)	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

## Sample assessment task

## Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12

## Task 7 – Unit 4

**Assessment type:** Philosophical analysis and evaluation (community of inquiry dialogue)

**Conditions**

Time for the task: 50 minutes in class under test conditions

**Task weighting:** 7.5% of the school mark for this pair of units

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The following dialogue is an excerpt from a classroom community of inquiry.

You are required to:

- summarise (2 marks)
- clarify (6 marks)
- critically evaluate the contributions of each participant. (12 marks)

**Total = 20 marks**

**Gwyneth:** Can you believe I'm 38 today? That means I'm probably halfway through my life—pretty soon I'm going to be dead. Dead! Finito! Kaput! And you will be, too. And everyone we know. What's the point of living if soon we'll all be gone and nothing we've done will mean anything to anyone?

**Gong Li:** That's a little melodramatic, don't you think? There's plenty to enjoy in life. And what does it matter if we're all going to die? It's not like being immortal is necessary for a meaningful life. We could spend all eternity bouncing a ball against a wall and that wouldn't make our lives meaningful. Either our lives are meaningful or they're not. It doesn't matter whether we die now, in 38 years, or never.

**Gwyneth:** Yes, it does. Look at it this way. If I write the sentence, 'My pony is sick', that won't mean anything if there's no-one around to read it. For something to have meaning, it has to mean something to someone.

**Gong Li:** But you're forgetting that God has a purpose for us all and, if we live according to His will, then our lives have meaning and, what's more, they have eternal meaning. That's why it doesn't matter whether we die one second from now or never. God is eternal and our lives will always mean something to Him.

**Gwyneth:** Oh, come on! You only believe in God because you don't want to face up to the fact that our lives are meaningless. And anyway, even if there was a God, what does it matter that He has a purpose for me? Suppose there is a God and He created us because He liked to watch people suffer. That wouldn't make our lives meaningful—it would make them a sick joke.

**Gong Li:** Sure, that's true, I guess. But, actually, I think God wants us to be happy. And, now that I think about it, it's really the happiness that matters. A meaningful life is a happy life. After all, it's what everyone is really striving for. And, if you're happy, then it doesn't matter whether you live forever or not.

## Marking key for sample assessment task 7 – Unit 4

Description	Marks
<b>Summary</b>	
Identifies the main position of the first participant	1
Identifies the main position of the second participant	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Clarification</b>	
<b>Concepts</b>	
States philosophical concepts that frame the argument of the first participant	1
States philosophical concepts that frame the argument of the second participant	1
<b>Arguments</b>	
Explains the arguments, using examples	2 (for each participant)
Describes the arguments	1 (for each participant)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	
<b>Examples</b>	
Explains the relevance of examples/counter-examples of the first participant	1
Explains the relevance of examples/counter-examples of the second participant	1
<b>Premises</b>	
Provides reasons to justify stated acceptability of the premises	2 (for each participant)
States the acceptability of the premises	1 (for each participant)
<b>Inferences</b>	
Provides reasons to justify stated strength of the inferential moves	2 (for each participant)
States the strength of the inferential moves	1 (for each participant)
<b>Cogency</b>	
Assesses the cogency of the argument of the first participant	1
Assesses the cogency of the argument of the second participant	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>