

PHILOSOPHY



Philosophy Program

Student Guide

CONTENTS

Studying in the Philosophy Program	1
Contact	1
What to expect of Staff	1
What staff expect of students	1
Unit Guides	2
Submission of Work	2
Appeal against Results	3
Academic Misconduct (including plagiarism)	4
Essays and Examinations in Philosophy	6
1. Writing Philosophy Essays	6
2. Good English	10
3. References and Bibliographies	13
4. Reading and Summarising Philosophical Writing	15
5. Examinations	16
Using the Library	20

Studying in the Philosophy Program

We hope very much that you will enjoy your time as a Philosophy student at La Trobe University and, whether you take only one unit or go on to Honours, we hope that you will look back on it as a valuable part of your education. The purpose of this booklet is to answer some of the questions that you may have about the **practicalities** of being a Philosophy student.

Contact

If at any time you have problems or queries that are not answered in this booklet, your unit guide, or that your tutor cannot answer for you, please contact the Coordinator of the Philosophy Program by making an appointment through the Philosophy Office (Level 3 Humanities 2 Building) or by telephoning (03) 9479 1673, or by e-mailing h.wilkie@latrobe.edu.au. Students on the Wodonga and Mildura campuses will obviously have to use phone or email in most cases, but they are assured that their concerns will be taken just as seriously as those of Bundoora students. The Philosophy Program web site is www.latrobe.edu.au/philosophy

General Expectations of Staff and Students

One great difference between school and university is that academic staff at universities have substantial research and administrative duties in addition to teaching. Students, therefore, will see a good deal less of their teachers at university than they are used to at school. So it is useful to set out the very general expectations that staff and students may reasonably have of each other.

Students may expect teaching staff to

- provide well-prepared, clear lectures and other classes;
- provide Unit Guides for each unit they teach which set out the assessment and other requirements for the unit;
- be responsive to student questions and concerns;
- be available for consultation for a reasonable amount of time outside class hours;
- mark, comment upon, and return student essays within a reasonable period after submission. Work which receives a penalty for late submission may be returned without detailed comments.

Staff will expect students to

- be aware of all the requirements set out or referred to in this Guide and in the relevant Unit Guides;
- attend classes, or, where that is not possible, take advantage of the additional material (online “companion site”, recorded lectures, texts and other handouts) to keep up with the unit;
- prepare for tutorials and other classes as required by the lecturer/tutor. Note that in a 15 credit point unit

students are expected to undertake about 6 hours of study per week in addition to class contact, and in a 20 credit point unit, about 8 hours: this is normally achieved by doing the required tutorial preparation and supplementary reading;

- seek help promptly from their tutor when something is not understood;
- keep the Unit Coordinator informed of any difficulties experienced that may interfere with studies and to seek help promptly when it is needed;
- submit work by the due date (unless special difficulties prevent this) completed in conformity with our requirements (see **Advice on Essays and Examinations** below).
- notify the tutor of any changes of address, phone numbers or email addresses.

Unit Guides

For every unit there is a **Unit Guide**. These contain such information as the broad aims and objectives of the unit, class requirements, assessment arrangements, due dates for essays and other assignments, contact details for staff, procedures for return of marked work, notes on WebCT etc. It is important to be sure that you get a copy of the Unit Guide for each unit in which you are enrolled and that you keep it for reference. The unit co-ordinator will assume that you have access to this information and will not chase you up to ensure that you are aware that, for example, a piece of work is due. Unit Guides are normally handed out at the first lecture in a unit: if you

miss out, additional copies will be in the racks outside the Bundoora Philosophy Office, from the Wodonga Faculty Office, or the Mildura University Office. They are also available on the Philosophy web site. Your lecturer (or in the case of Wodonga and Mildura students, your tutor) may also have spare copies.

Submission of Work

Except in the rare case where you are told to hand in a short piece of work in class, all essays and other assignments should be lodged in the chute (marked Assignment and Essay Box) at the Philosophy Enquiries Counter, Level 3, Humanities 2 Building. **Make sure the cover sheet is attached and the declaration of authorship signed. Work without a signed declaration of authorship attached will not be accepted for marking. Your signature on this sheet is also a declaration that you have read the discussion of plagiarism in this booklet.**

Essay should be presented on single-sided A4 size paper, double spaced with wide margins (4-5cm). Pages should be numbered. Foot size should not be less than 12 pt.

Deadlines, extensions and Penalties.

All work should be submitted **before 8:00 pm** on the due date.

The Faculty rules for late submission in undergraduate units apply in all first, second and third year Philosophy units. The rules are —

Except in the case of work required for a particular class, such as a class paper or journal where late submission is not practicable, a late penalty of 2% of the available marks shall apply for each working day beyond the due date (either original or extended) up to but not exceeding ten working days. Work submitted more than ten working days after the due date (either original or extended, as applicable) will not be accepted. Extensions will normally be granted to students who have medical or comparably serious reasons for seeking an extension, but not otherwise. The Unit Coordinator will normally consider applications for extension of time, and these will normally be sought prior to the due date; however, extensions may be granted retrospectively at the discretion of the Unit Coordinator, Program Coordinator or Head of School.

Anyone who wishes to seek an extension of time for an assignment should contact the Unit Coordinator or their tutor before the due date, or, if that is not possible, submit their case for an extension in writing with the assignment. Students who seek an extension on medical grounds should supply a doctor's certificate.

Students whose work during a Semester is seriously disrupted by illness or a comparably serious interference in their normal activities should apply for Special Consideration. Such an application is made by completing the Special Consideration form available from the Student Centre in the David Myers Building. The application will apply to all units in which the student is enrolled and will be taken into account by Unit

Coordinators and Chief Examiners in finalizing results. If you have any questions or concerns about making such an application, please contact the Program Coordinator.

Appeal against Results

After first discussing the matter with the original marker, to have the marker explain his/her reasons for the original mark. The Faculty rules for appeal against results apply in all first, second and third year Philosophy units. The rules are —

In units from first to third year level students have the right to appeal against the initial mark given to any piece of work worth more than 20% of the available marks, or against their final mark for the unit. Normally an appeal shall be in writing, shall set out the reasons for the appeal, and shall be submitted to the Unit Coordinator not more than ten working days after students have been informed that the work is available for collection. In the event that the Unit Coordinator is the original marker the appeal shall be to the Program Coordinator, and in the event that this person should be the original marker the appeal shall be to the Head of School. If, in the opinion of the person dealing with the appeal a case has been made, the following procedure shall then be observed:

- 1 a second marker shall be appointed and the work marked "blind";
- 2 in the event of disagreement the markers are to discuss the work and attempt to arrive at an agreed mark which will then stand;

3 where agreement cannot be reached on the mark, but there is agreement on the grade, the result will only be lower than the original mark if both markers agree on this, otherwise it will be the average of the two marks or the original mark whichever is the higher;

4 where agreement on the grade cannot be reached the Program Coordinator (or Head of School if the Program Coordinator is one of the markers) shall appoint a third marker who will, after considering the opinions of the two previous markers and the work in question, act as an adjudicator and determine the final mark;

5 students who are unsatisfied with the outcome of this process are to be advised of their right to appeal to the University Ombudsman.

Academic Misconduct

There are several forms of academic misconduct, of which cheating in examinations or stealing another student's work to submit as your own, are obvious examples. Plagiarism is an equally serious form of academic misconduct, yet the understanding of it that students bring with them from school is often inadequate, as is the understanding of appropriate ways to avoid it. **It is therefore of the greatest importance that you read and understand the following section.** Ask a tutor or lecturer in any case where you are not completely clear about what is required.

You should also understand that avoidance of plagiarism is not the only reason for taking care with referencing. Careful referencing is important to scholarship for exactly the same reason that careful description of experiments matters to

scientists. This is discussed further in the section below, **Advice on Essays and Examinations**, and it is something that you will need to understand as a part of your university education. In this section we focus on the legal aspects of correct referencing.

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is avoided by correct referencing in all written work. The precise details of how to do this are discussed below in **Advice on Essays and Examinations**. When is referencing required? The basic point is that the work you submit at university is the basis upon which your knowledge and understanding are evaluated, and upon which, ultimately, you will receive a degree. It is therefore essential that your teachers know exactly what you have contributed to an essay or exercise and what is the work of others. There are many occasions on which it will be appropriate for you to refer to or discuss the ideas of others, so it is therefore necessary for you to learn when this is so and how to do it. Again, this is discussed in **Advice on Essays and Examinations** below.

Printing an essay from a web site, or carefully copying out another student's essay, would both be extremely blatant forms of plagiarism if the result were to be submitted by you as your own work. However, there are other subtler forms of plagiarism that you must avoid.

In general, **to take someone else's ideas or words, and present them as your own, without acknowledgment, is plagiarism.** There are two things to note here — ideas and words. Thus, to take ideas first, it would be plagiarism if you

were to present a significant argument or theory which you have learned by reading or listening to someone else and then to present it as if it were your own argument or theory. But using the words of another to express an idea, rather than trying to say it yourself, is equally plagiarism unless the authorship of those words is acknowledged. If you do have reason to quote exactly what another has said or written, then you must enclose it in quotation marks and you must give a reference to the source. Equally, paraphrase of a passage from someone else's writing must be correctly acknowledged.

In all written work, you must show all sources from which they have obtained material, by providing references AND a bibliography. (On how to do this, see the section below **Advice on Essays and Examinations.**)

On any occasion when you **use a substantial phrase or sentence or sentences of another writer**, you must enclose them in quotation marks (inverted commas) and state in a footnote or endnote or in some other approved way the author's name, the name of the book or article, and the page number(s) of the quoted passage, or give a reference to the web site or other electronic source. Your readers must be able, at least in principle, to look for themselves at the material you are citing either by going to an appropriate library or using the Internet. Similar referencing must also be used when you closely paraphrase the work of another writer, or when you make use of a particular point or argument put forward specifically by a writer. A **bibliography** at the end of your paper should list all the works consulted in the course of preparing it (**whether or not** reference is also made to these

works in footnotes or endnotes or in your text). For details on how to present references and a bibliography, see **Advice on Essays and Examinations** below.

Penalties for plagiarism vary according to the extent and severity of the case. Where there is simply careless referencing, marks may be lost for the piece of work and the student warned. However, where serious plagiarism is suspected a report must be made to the Head of School who will require a written explanation from the student. The Head of School then determines a penalty. This may be failure in the piece of work (which often results in failure in the unit) or, in severe cases, referral of the student to the Faculty Academic Misconduct Committee. The penalties available to this committee include exclusion from the University. In any case where a penalty for plagiarism is imposed, whether by the Head of School or by the Academic Misconduct Committee, the student's name is recorded in a central data base. A previous conviction for plagiarism is taken into account in determining a penalty for a subsequent offence, and students who are discovered to be serial plagiarists must expect a severe penalty.

'Accidental plagiarism'. In some cases students are found to have reproduced in their essays material from books that is not acknowledged, yet this has arisen not from dishonesty, or a deliberate attempt to deceive, or even from ignorance of referencing requirements, but from carelessness. Such carelessness is culpable, and "accidental plagiarism" will also be treated severely.

Essays consisting largely of (fully acknowledged) quotations and paraphrase. You should note that however carefully you include references and a bibliography, an essay which consists substantially of quotations from, or even a close summary of, other writers, will get very low marks. This applies even if plagiarism has been avoided because you have carefully acknowledged all the sources of your material. The point here is that you have not demonstrated any real grasp of the issues being discussed. To show that you have mastered the material you need at least to be able to state it in your own words.

Memorising passages from books. The same point applies to the practice, adopted occasionally by a few students with very good memories, of memorising a passage from a book and reproducing it in an examination. It must be recognised that such examination answers do not represent evidence that a student has thought about the issues, or even understands them, and the work will receive correspondingly low marks.

Using the same material in separate essays. The situation will occasionally arise when two different units overlap to the extent that essays on the same topic are set in both. Students are not permitted to write a single essay and submit it for assessment in two different units. To avoid doing so, they should choose a different topic in one of the courses. If there is any difficulty or doubt about this, students should consult one of the lecturers concerned.

Declaration of Authorship. Every essay or other assignment that you submit in Philosophy will be required to have a cover

sheet that includes a declaration of authorship and an acknowledgement that you have read the discussion of plagiarism in this booklet. Your work **will not be accepted for assessment** unless it carries your signature on this declaration.

Essays and Examinations in Philosophy

1

Advice on Writing Philosophy Essays

(and what we expect from a good essay)

Most philosophy essay topics involve exposition AND assessment of a view.

Very typical sorts of question will be “State and assess the such and such theory of so and so”, Or “Critically evaluate the such and such theory”. Or “What is theory X? Can it deal with problem Y? Are there other problems which make it untenable?”

So you will need to *state* the theory, (give a clear exposition of it, in your own words, to show you understand it) *and assess* it (say whether the reasons for believing it seem to outweigh the reasons that can be given for rejecting it). (There are some

other sorts of essay topics, which are mentioned below, but these are the typical ones.)

With these topics, the two big things we want from you are:

1. Mastery of the area under consideration. Show that you understand *the theory or view concerned* and at least some of the standard arguments for and against it. Understanding it means that you are able to put these matters in your own words, explain what question the theory is supposed to be answering, and how it answers it. Showing this understanding may involve contrasting this theory with other rival answers to the same question that it is trying to answer.

2. Your own judgement, backed by your reasons. We want you also to show that you have engaged your mind with the problem presented, and started to form your own judgements about whether the theory is acceptable, and whether the arguments are sound. We want your judgement, but we want your *reasoned* judgement. You need to be saying *why* you think one view is better than another, *why* an argument is unconvincing, and so forth.

Other types of essay question

Occasionally a question will not explicitly ask for your evaluation of a view, but will ask for an explanation or interpretation of some philosophical theory. In such a case, a clear exposition of the theory which shows that you

understand it is all that is required. However, even with such questions, you will usually earn more marks if you also show awareness of problems faced by the theory or of good reasons which may be given in support of it.

In general, though, we want *both* mastery of the material *and* your own reasoned judgement. If you show very good mastery of a difficult topic, but have no views of your own, but fail to make any evaluations of your own when you are asked to, then you may pass, but you are unlikely to do well. On the other hand, if you go “off on your own” and give your own views without giving any consideration to the careful thought that others have put in on the topic, the same applies. We want your reasoned conclusion, but we want your acknowledgment of opposing positions too.

“Originality”

We can reassure you on one thing that worries some students. When we say that we want your own reasoned judgements, we are not asking you to come up with ideas that are so original that no one has had them before. That would be a ridiculous expectation. We just want you to try and make up your mind between the different competing views. The conclusion you come to may well be tentative, and one about which you will change your mind sooner or later. It may even be that you find it really hard to come to a conclusion. That’s all right. Just try to think your way through to some view on the matter, and if you cannot make up your mind, at least explain why you find it so difficult. (Perhaps you could explain *why* the arguments for two different positions seem equally sound.) *In any case, don’t merely summarise the view of others.*

Other qualities of a good essay

(a) Aim for clarity and precision, and generally take care with your English. Re-read your paper before submitting it, to check for clarity. (See Sec. 4 below.)

(b) Take care with philosophical terminology.

In Philosophy, as in many other units, words sometimes are used with **special definitions**, which are often a little different to, and more precise than, the ordinary everyday meanings of the words. You need to get used to this, as sometimes it seems rather pedantic. However, it is important, and in your essay writing you will need to use these words with precision, as their exact meaning will *matter* in the context. You will have to *specify their exact meaning* (to show you know what you are talking about) and *systematically stick to that meaning*.

(c) Keep what you say relevant to the set question.

Do not just write about something vaguely to do with one of the ideas that occurs in the set question, even if that is what really interests you. You must write something that answers the question exactly as it is set. It is a good idea always to write the set question in full at the head of your essay.

(d) Structure your paper carefully. Make sure it is clear what you think you are doing at any given point. Use sub-headings, or number your points if it helps. (See Section 4, para 3 (d) below on using “sign posts” to help your reader.) Remember that word-processors, by allowing you to shift paragraphs around easily, can sometimes leave you with an

essay which does not deal with the issues in a logical way. Once again: **re-read you essay before handing it in.**

(e) Keep quotations to a minimum. Remember, you only show mastery of an issue when you can put it in your own words. Do not use quotes to make your essay look more professional (it doesn't), or to try to prove that you have read a lot. Only quote when you need to discuss the precise wording that someone has used. (Other disciplines in the University may encourage quotation for other reasons. Do not follow their practice in Philosophy essays.)

(f) Provide a proper bibliography and footnotes or endnotes. (See sections below on avoiding plagiarism and on setting out bibliographies and notes.)

(g) Take the word limit seriously. Sometimes you will feel like writing a much longer essay than you have been asked to write; you will have thought a lot about the matter and have a lot to say. Even so, you must keep to the specified number of words (usually give or take 10% or so either way). It is part of the discipline of essay writing that you have to select what can be said clearly within a certain specified length. On the other hand, an essay that is seriously short of the required length is not adequate either. The bibliography is not counted but footnotes are.

(h) Read the instructions. Make sure you read carefully any special instructions you are given for a particular essay, and also that you that you have understood the general points listed in Section 1 of this booklet.

(i) Practise. There is no simple formula for producing good papers in philosophy. Doing so will depend on skills which you will develop over a period of time. However, attention to the points above will help you to avoid some pitfalls. And remember that if you do not get a good mark for one essay, it does not mean that you cannot get a much higher mark for your next essay.

Advice on how to go about working on your essays

1. Do not leave all your work to the night before the essay is due.

2. A bad way to prepare an essay is this: go and read as much as you can on the topic, taking notes on all that you read, then writing up an essay from your notes. This is bad because:

(i) with a lot of straight reading you get mental indigestion and confusion;

(ii) it is hard for you to form your own views on the issue;

(iii) you tend to produce boring essays which merely summarise views of the authors you have read, and show little thought of your own. This will be boring both to you and your reader, and will not get good marks;

(iv) you are more likely to end up plagiarising.

3. A good way to prepare essays is this: look at your lecture notes, or a book, to give you just enough information to understand the topic. Then sit down and think about what your initial views on the topic are. Scribble down a page or so of notes, working out your own ideas. Then go away and do some reading. Then think some more. Then read some more. Then try and write out a plan, or even a draft. Read a bit more, if you need to. The 'think first, read second' policy has the following advantages:

(i) what you read will be much more meaningful and interesting to you if you already have views on the matter, even if those views are only tentative, and are later changed;

(ii) you will read more critically, as you find yourself sometimes disagreeing with an author;

(iii) this will in general produce a more independent-minded essay, which will both give you better marks, and give you much more personal satisfaction.

Talk to other students about the topic, and share ideas with them. This is a helpful and sensible thing to be doing. It is not cheating. What you must not do, of course, is to copy anyone else's work. You must write your own essay.

2

Good English

1. English expression is important

You cannot write good philosophy in bad English. Clumsy or tangled expression will spoil your arguments, insights and explanations.

Bad spelling, bad punctuation, and ungrammatical sentences, even where they do not interfere with the meaning of what you write, are simply unacceptable in work at university level. Future employers will not accept them either.

2. Badly written essays may have to be re-written

The Philosophy Program expects essays to be expressed in English of an adequate standard. Badly written essays may be returned for re-writing, with a mark being released only when a properly written essay has been submitted by a new deadline (together with a copy of the original essay). In this case, the mark awarded may still be the original mark, rather than a mark for the later, improved version. (Note, however, that sometimes resubmissions are permitted (and even encouraged) by tutors for other reasons, and in these cases a new, higher mark may be awarded.)

Students sometimes ask whether marks are taken off for poor expression. Different markers will put different amounts of emphasis on this matter. All agree that poor expression is a bad thing but most also see their job as being to assess a student's ability in philosophy rather than in English

expression, and are most likely to mark an essay down for poor English when this poor English lowers the quality of the philosophy. Hence the adoption of the system above, where poorly written essays have to be re-written, rather than simply receiving low marks.

3. What do we mean by good expression?

Here are some points. Aside from a few tips, what follows does not give instructions on how to write good English. If you need more professional help, then see 4 below in this section.

(a) The right words are chosen. and they are used clearly.

(a). Words are used with their correct meanings. Always use a dictionary to check any non-technical word when you are not quite sure of its meaning. Use your philosophy texts and references etc. to check the meaning of technical philosophical terms. Do not rely on the dictionary in these cases. Never use words you only half understand.

(b). The meanings of words are explicitly defined by the writer where necessary. Technical terms (e.g. words for philosophical theories or concepts) have to be defined to show that you know what they mean. Other words sometimes have to be defined because many words are vague, or ambiguous, or take on different shades of meaning in different contexts, and the reader needs to know the exact meaning you intend in the context of your essay.

(c). Words are correctly spelled.

(d). Jargon is avoided.

(b) Good sentences are used

- (a) There are no errors of punctuation.
- (b) There are no ungrammatical sentences.
- (c) The point being made in a sentence is precise, and is clear to the reader.
- (d) The sentence makes its point in the fewest words possible.
- (e) The sentence emphasises that aspect of the point which deserves emphasis.
- (f) Words are placed correctly in the sentence to convey the right meaning. (For example, do not write "Russell's theory only satisfactorily explains ..." when what you mean is "only Russell's theory gives a satisfactory explanation of ...".)

(c) Paragraphs should be well constructed

- a) The connections between the sentences in a paragraph should be obvious to the reader. The reader should never be left wondering what connection a sentence is supposed to have to those immediately before it. There should be clear and accurate use of "link words": the words indicating just what the connection is supposed to be between the claims expressed in two successive sentences (or, indeed, within one sentence).

Think of the difference between "and" and "but" inserted between two claims. Some other link words are "therefore", "however", and "similarly". You will be able to think of many more.

- b) Paragraphs should have a focus or topic - one main idea that is being dealt with. They should discuss a point or explain an idea or put forward an objection. It should be possible to identify the role of a paragraph in the general scheme of your essay.

(d) The whole essay is well constructed

- a) Use "sign posts" to tell the reader where you are going. Say things like "I turn now to the second objection ...". If it helps, use sub-headings, or numbered sections. (Note: some Schools in the University may not accept this practice.) The reader should never be left wondering: "Why did she/he start discussing this issue here?"
- b) Use an introductory section to state what you are going to do in your essay, and use a concluding section to sum up what you have done. Since often we are clear about what it is that we want to say only by the end of the writing of a first version of an essay, try to produce a first draft and then rework your essay from it.
- c) It should always be clear to the reader how the intermediate sections of your essay relate to the essay topic, and to the statement you make in your introduction

about what you are going to say in answer to the topic question.

(e) Really good expression.

Students occasionally turn in essays which are not only soundly written in all the respects mentioned above, but have something much more: lucidity, grace, a flowing elegance. Such writing is a great delight, but it is certainly beyond what we expect of students. Most tutors would doubt their ability to help students to write at that level, and our main aim here is simply to eliminate poor expression and develop crisp, competent, clear writing.

4. How can you improve your ability to express yourself in writing?

(a) Who needs to?

A few students have real trouble writing adequate English. A good many more write adequately, but could still help themselves and their work in philosophy by improving their capacities. Every student ought to think carefully about English expression when writing philosophy essays.

(b) Help yourself: get on top of the philosophical issues.

Sometimes bad expression arises from a student's having a weak grasp of the philosophical issues about which he or she is trying to write. People who write quite well when they are in command of their material sometimes have their expression fall to pieces when they are not on top of their unit matter.

If you know that your work is poorly expressed, and also know that you are confused about the unit matter, the first step is to get help on the unit matter, and resolve your confusions. With luck, the problem you have with expression may just disappear.

(c) Help yourself: take more care.

Sometimes you will know, without anyone else telling you, that you could have written much better English than you did. Your essay was poorly written because you did it too hastily and you didn't take enough care over it.

In a case like this, you know what to do next time: simply take more care. In fact, as you may well be required to re-write your badly written essay, a more careful effort may be needed straight away.

(d) Other help.

Your Faculty's Academic Skills Unit is the best place to get further assistance with essay writing and English expression matters. These Units all have highly trained staff who specialise in giving help to students. For Bundoora students the Humanities Academic Skills Unit is located on Level 4 of the Humanities 3 Building. Wodonga students should enquire at the Faculty Office and Mildura students at the University Office.

Citing your Sources: References and Bibliographies

It is compulsory to:

- a) have a bibliography at the end of your essay, where you list all works (books, journal articles, web sites etc) which you have used. and give full bibliographic details;
- b) acknowledge the exact source (including exact page numbers) of all particular points AND quotations which you have taken from other authors.

There are a number of different styles in which bibliographical references may be written. Some Programs in the University expect their students to follow one format or another quite rigidly. The Philosophy Program does not insist on a particular format, but the following is recommended.

The recommended system

After any quotation, or any sentence in which you have made a point that needs to be acknowledged as having come from another source, put, in brackets, the surname of the author concerned, the date of the publication concerned, and the page number. And, of course, make

sure that work is listed in your bibliography with full bibliographic details.

This means that, in the body of your essay, you do not put numbers which refer to either footnotes or endnotes, and you do

not repeat all the publication details of a book or article in separated footnotes if you refer to it several times.

Example: Suppose you have just quoted from page 103 of Keith Campbell's book, *Body and Mind*, which was published in London by Macmillan in 1970. In your essay after the quote, you would put

(Campbell 1970, p. 103)

In your bibliography, your reference to the book should be like this:

Campbell, Keith (1970). *Body and Mind*, London: Macmillan.

In other words, give surname, forename or initials, year of publication in brackets, name of the book in italics (not quotation marks; use underlining if you do not have italics), place of publication, publisher.

Points to note

- The point of putting the year after the author's name is that there may be more than one book by that author in

your bibliography. If there is more than one publication by a particular author in one year, label them (1970A), (1970B), etc

- Page numbers *must* be included, and they must be exact. Do *not* acknowledge a point as having come from, for example, (Campbell, 1970, pages 102-121)

To refer to an article in a journal.

Put in your bibliography the following details, in this order: the surname of the author of the article, followed by the forename or initials, the date of publication in brackets, the name of the article (in inverted commas, not italicised), the name of the journal (italicised), the volume and issue number of the journal, the pages of the article [i.e. first and last pages].

Example: Fischer, J.M. (1983) "Freedom and Foreknowledge", *Philosophical Review*, vol. XCII, No. 1. pp. 67-80.

In the body of your essay, you would acknowledge a point from this article in the same way as you would from a book.

Example: (Fischer, 1983, p. 70)

To refer to an article or chapter in an anthology, or in an encyclopedia

In your bibliography, give: the name of the author of the article, chapter, or encyclopedia entry (surname first); the title of the article, chapter or entry (in inverted commas, not underlined), the word "in", then the name of the anthology or encyclopedia (italicised, not in inverted commas), then "edited

by" and give the name of the editor, then place of publication, the publisher, the volume number (if it is a multi-volume work); the page numbers of the whole article, chapter or entry.

Example: Huxley, Julian, (1981). "The Creed of a Scientific Humanist", in *The Meaning of Life* edited by E D. Klemke, New York, O. U. P., pp. 63-9.

Examples of unacceptable bibliographical references:

Klemke E.D., (ed.), *The Meaning of Life*

Edwards, Paul (1966) *The Encyclopaedia or Philosophy*, New York pp 103-9

The unsatisfactory references leave out vital information, and not only about the publisher and date of the works. The second leaves out who actually wrote the Encyclopedia article to which you are referring, and even what the article was about. The first leaves out any specification of which of the various chapters within Klemke's anthology were consulted. (In the unlikely event that all were consulted, all should have been listed separately. Since it is an anthology, they will be separately authored.)

To refer to a source of material on the net

Give the author and date if these can be known, and web address, and everything that is necessary to allow your reader to reach the same source. If the web site is a large one, you may need to give further specification of just where you found the point concerned.

An alternative format

An acceptable form of referencing is where numbers are placed in your text, which cross-refer to notes, either at the foot of the page (“footnotes”) or grouped at the end of the essay (“endnotes”). Footnotes may contain full references to works, or may themselves cross-refer to a bibliography (though this tends to be clumsier). The essential point, however, is to give **full and accurate identification of all your sources, and in particular of quotations.**

4

Reading and Summarising Passages of Philosophical Writing

1. Summarising and Understanding

The ability to read a passage of philosophical writing with understanding is closely related to the ability to provide a good summary of the passage. By and large, if you can do one you can do the other. A summary is a statement in your own words, and in much shorter form, of the content of a passage. When you take notes on a book you are reading, you are attempting a form of summary. The process is an important one. Here are some tips.

2. What should be in a summary?

Your summary must contain not just a point by point, sentence by sentence, restatement of the original. (In particular it should not merely be a selection of sentences - say every third sentence - taken out of the original.) An adequate summary must contain a statement of an overview of what is going on in the passage being summarised.

Here are some of the things that an author may be doing in a passage of philosophical writing:

- Putting forward views on a topic.
- Putting forward an argument for a view.
- Putting forward an objection to a view.
- Putting forward an argument against an objection to a view.
- Setting out a number of contrasting views or alternative answers to some question.
- Explaining a technical concept.
- Explaining a complex theory.
- Discussing whether two apparently different views really are different at all.

You will be able to think of other possibilities. In longer passages of writing, several of these will be going on. In any case, your summary must make clear just what the author is doing.

In addition, your summary must make clear *what the original author's own attitudes and beliefs were concerning the material in the passage summarised*. Again, consider the different possibilities:

- if the author is putting forward views or arguments, are they her/his own views and arguments?
- or are they the views and arguments of someone else? Are they being considered "for the sake of argument" - perhaps so that they can be refuted?

There is another point. The author may have drawn a firm and definite conclusion in his/her discussion. Or a tentative conclusion may have emerged. Or perhaps the whole matter was left unresolved. Once more, you will need to include this point in your summary.

Once you have clarified for yourself the answers to these questions, you will find that the task of stating briefly the gist of the position, argument or discussion, becomes much easier.

3. What if you simply cannot understand the passage to be summarised?

This will of course happen sometimes. The answer is: talk to your tutor. Help with that sort of problem is what she or he is there for.

4. Summarising arguments

It is sometimes difficult to put an argument into much shorter form. If it has been at all well stated in the original version, it will not have too many redundant words. To deal with arguments, it is recommended that you try to put them into standard premise/conclusion form, and also try to add unstated (suppressed) premises where appropriate. Often you will find this quite difficult, but it is worth persevering, as it really is an important step towards both understanding and assessing arguments.

5. On taking notes

When you take notes, you should take them in your own words. When you do use the author's own words (e.g. where his/her precise formulation is important) then use quotation marks, and make a note of the page number. This practice will first of all force you to see whether you really understand what you are summarising, and also will help you avoid the error of transcribing into an essay an unacknowledged quotation from an author you discuss.

Examinations

1. General Advice on examinations

(a) **Understand what you have to do.** Make sure you understand how many questions you are going to have to answer, from what sections of the examination you may select your questions, whether you are allowed to write examination answers on exactly the same questions as those on which you have already written essays, and so forth.

(b) **Divide your time sensibly.** Make sure you understand whether equal marks are given for all questions. One common form of examination requires either two or three questions to be answered in three hours. Where equal marks are available for each question, make sure you spend roughly equal amounts of time on each question. For example, where three questions are set, it is usually very much to your disadvantage if you do two good questions only, or two good questions plus a terribly brief answer to a third one.

(c) **Exams and essays.** Markers look for much the same qualities of philosophical understanding in examination answers as they do in essays. Many of the points made above about essays apply to examination answers. However, no-one expects the expression in examination answers to be as good as in essays, and the handling of ideas is often rather rougher than in essays. Do not worry too much about this. Markers

take account of the circumstances in which examination answers are produced.

(d) **Read through your answers.** In most exams you will find that you have plenty of time to read over what you have written. Do this, as you will find that you are able to correct bits where you did not quite say what you meant to say, or you will realise that you have left something important out, and you can add it in.

(e) **Standards in exams.** You are not expected to produce the same standard of work in an exam answer as in an essay, and you will be marked on an appropriate scale. Your examiners will be looking for the same philosophical skills as we hope you will show in essays, but do not expect polished presentation.

(f) **Particular exams vary from unit to unit.** You should make sure you have all relevant information given out by your lecturer. The advice given in this section is general, and you may get more specific information elsewhere.

2. Short answer examinations

The short answer tests are best prepared for by making sure you know all the basic points covered in the main topics of the units. Know:

- the definitions of the key ideas and technical terms
- the main theories,
- the main arguments that have been discussed for and against the theories.

The point of these exams is usually to test your grasp of the main topics covered in the unit, and not to test your philosophical abilities in depth. These exams usually do not call for you to make judgments about philosophical issues, or assess arguments.

3. Essay examinations

What we want in an essay written in an exam is not essentially different from what we want in an ordinary essay. These are:

- **A clear statement of the issue** or problem that the question is about, showing that you understand it
- (including the key concepts, the alternative answers to the question, and the various arguments for and against those answers)
- **Your own judgment on the exact question asked**, and not just your summary of someone else's answer
- **Your reasons for giving that answer.**

In your preparation of topics on which you expect to answer a question in an exam, you should be preparing to do exactly these things.

Here are some other tips:

How many topics to prepare? Preparing for an examination which will have (unseen) questions on a number of topics covered in the unit, you should know a bit about the overall

spread of topics covered in the unit, but you would be wise to work in depth on two at least of the major topics, preparing your views on the theories and arguments relevant to them. (Two gives you a safety margin, in case the question you get on one is not quite what you expected.) Of course if you know the questions in advance, as is sometimes the case, you can prepare just one answer.

Do not try to write out your answer fully and memorise it before the examination. It is better to make sure you remember your outline, or *a list of main points you have to cover*. It is often a good idea to take the time to jot down your essay plan form on the left hand 'scribble' page of your examination booklet before you start your answer.

Do not worry if you are not writing all the time. Time spent planning your answer in point form, reading over your answer at the end, or even just stopping to think about what you are saying, is usually well spent.

There is no need for footnotes or bibliographies in exams. When you use the views of others, it is enough simply to say "As Armstrong writes ...", or something of the sort.

How long should an answer be? There is no fixed number of words or pages which you are expected to write. Some people write short, very condensed answers: others go on and on for many pages. They may obtain equal marks. However, it is also important to realise that a reasonably full answer is needed. Remember that an exam answer is often worth the same number of marks as an essay of between 1200 and 2000

words, depending on the unit. You are not expected to write an equivalent number of words in the exam, but, unless you have very small handwriting, or are very good at putting your points concisely, you should probably be thinking of a minimum of 3 full pages. Many of you will of course write a great deal more.

Passing and doing well. It is useful to remember that the first 50% of marks on each question are easiest to get. You will often get these for little more than a clear statement of issues or theories, and a setting down of some of the standard arguments for or against them. Make sure you do this basic work for any question you answer, even if you find you cannot do any more. Handling more detail, or more difficult arguments, will get you more marks. Students who get A or B marks for an answer usually do so by showing that they can handle the material in a way that goes beyond setting down text book points, and by showing that they have the sort of grasp which enables them to use arguments they have learned in one context in a somewhat new way. This, and other evidence of command of the material, and evidence that they have been thinking about it - doing philosophy, not merely learning other peoples' philosophy - will usually be the sign of a really good answer.

Testing your memory versus testing your mastery. Examinations are a test of your memory of the ideas you have studied, but they test much more than that. They test your understanding and mastery of those ideas. You show this mastery in various ways: (i) use new examples to illustrate the theories, rather than ones from the lectures or texts; (ii) show

you can transfer points learned in the context of one problem to a new context. The ability to apply a point to a new issue is a particularly impressive demonstration of mastery. Sometimes new ideas will come to you in an examination. Welcome this. The fact that you are thinking for yourself will come through in your answer, and you will usually be rewarded for it in terms of marks.

What if you get into a mess? For instance, you may suddenly realise that what you have just written down completely contradicts what you were saying earlier. In such a case, do not panic, and, particularly, do not start crossing out whole pages of what you have written. The best idea is to just note explicitly that you find there is this contradiction, and then go on to try and straighten matters out. Say something like: "But I now realise this view contradicts my earlier point that ... (such and such). In this case I would have to withdraw this (or the earlier) claim, and make ... consequential changes to my answer." An examiner who finds you intelligently grappling with such a difficulty is likely to be much more impressed than if you merely cross out what you have written, and write a short alternative answer.

What if you are ill just before, or during, an examination? As soon as you are able, see a doctor, as you will need a medical certificate. Then go as soon as possible to Student Administration, and fill out a Special Consideration Form, to which your medical certificate will be attached.

Using the Library

The Borchardt Library at La Trobe University has an excellent Philosophy collection, and a very professional and helpful staff. They understand that such a large Library is unfamiliar to students coming straight from school and you will find them very willing to help you if you ask. One very useful resource is the “Library Skills Online”.

“Library Skills Online” is a set of nine tutorials designed to help students learn basic skills in analysing a topic, identifying relevant information and in acknowledging those sources appropriately. Each tutorial is interactive, with instructions to complete basic exercises and an optional quiz at the end of each module. Offered as a supplement to the extensive training programs already offered at each campus, these online tutorials offer another opportunity for assistance to students who are unable

to attend scheduled sessions or would like the option of working through a tutorial at their own pace.

To access, please click on
www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/libskills
<<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/libskills>>

From the menu page, individual tutorials or parts of tutorials may be selected. The following tutorials are currently available.

- Using...Library Skills Online
- Understanding your Topic
- Acknowledging your Sources
- Searching the Catalogue
- Keyword Searching in the Catalogue
- Searching the Internet
- Finding Journal Articles