2023 VCE Philosophy external assessment report

General comments

The 2023 Philosophy examination provided students with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of the concepts, viewpoints and arguments from the set texts, to evaluate these viewpoints and arguments, and to apply their learning to consider the viewpoints and arguments presented in a range of accessible extracts.

Many students were able to provide accurate and appropriately detailed responses to Section A questions. Students largely understood that a good response requires a complete answer that addresses only what the question asks and no more. Many students were able to construct high-scoring responses for those questions in which they were required to explain an idea or outline an argument. However, questions that invited students to evaluate arguments appeared more challenging; a significant number of students supported their claims with their own personal beliefs or simply articulated the argument they were evaluating a second time.

The responses to Section B suggested that students had a clear understanding of the expectations of this section. Students referred to the extract in some detail and ensured their answers were directed at the question. Generally, students understood that it is important to draw on a philosopher's arguments when discussing possible positions in relation to the question; however, there were many students who didn't include these arguments or included far more than was necessary to develop a relevant discussion. The need to provide a justified, personal response to the question often received only cursory attention and many students did not provide appropriate justification for their claims.

Section C offered students two accessible extracts from which to build their essay on technology and the good life. High-scoring responses were able to use these extracts in a detailed and relevant way to engage in a sustained discussion about technology and the good life, supported by the judicious use of the chosen philosophy and well-chosen examples. While most students understood the requirement to use the extract, many struggled to use it in a detailed way. For a significant number of students, developing a response that integrated the extract and the philosophy, and engaged in relevant and sustained evaluation supported by examples, was challenging.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

This report provides sample answers, or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

Section A

Question 1

arks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	12	21	27	40	2.0

High-scoring responses drew on the arguments presented in the Second Meditation, specifically the cogito argument, to answer the question. Responses that did not score well identified Descartes' reason for why the mind cannot be doubted but did not include his claim that the body can be doubted or did not link the distinction between the body and the mind (respectively, physical and extended and non-physical and non-extended) to doubt.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In order to find a thing he can be certain of, Descartes applies a systematic process of radical doubt (doubting anything that can be called into doubt). He posits that he can doubt his senses as they have deceived him before, leading him to doubt the existence of the body. Descartes then contends that he cannot doubt the fact that he is thinking of doubting, thus concluding that he cannot doubt the existence of the mind as a 'thinking thing'. This leads Descartes to argue that the body is an extended non-thinking thing whereas the mind is a thinking non-extended thing, arguing for dualism.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	17	57	25	1.1

Nagel chooses bats as his example for two reasons; they are similar enough to us that we can presume they have conscious experience, but the nature of that conscious experience is of a radically different nature to our own due to the fact bats possess a different sensory apparatus. While most students were able to identify the second of these reasons, many failed to identify the first and so provided an incomplete response. Another common error made by students was to discuss how the bat demonstrates why physicalist accounts of mind are incomplete rather than addressing the question of why the bat was chosen by Nagel. Such responses could not be given full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Nagel selects bats as they have a sensory apparatus far different from ours, yet are generally regarded as having something that it is like to be a bat. By emphasising the rich subjective experience of a bat, an experience that cannot be accounted for in physicalist terms, Nagel highlights the limitations of materialism.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	13	24	42	21	1.7

This question invited students to consider the extent to which the example of the bat provides a strong challenge to physicalism. Many students considered the question more generally and, rather than discussing the example of the bat, instead discussed the degree to which Nagel's broader argument represents a strong

challenge to physicalism. Other students disregarded the invitation to consider the extent to which the bat serves as a strong challenge to physicalism. Neither of these responses could be awarded full marks.

High-scoring responses were able to identify a position in relation to the question (I agree / I disagree) and provide a reason or reasons to support that position. Many students discussed how the example of the bat convincingly serves to demonstrate the limitations of physicalism or discussed how our inability to understand bat consciousness demonstrates the shortcomings of our current scientific tools rather than a flaw with the physicalist account of mind. A small number of students discussed how Nagel demands too much of an account of mind (how it feels rather than simply how it works) or that he relies on the completeness of the physicalist account of mind to posit that notion that bats have consciousness in the first place.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

I agree with Nagel, contending that the fact physicalists using objective science to explain the subjective nature of consciousness is flawed. For example, a scientist can know all of the objective data about chocolate such as its texture, amount of sugar, but never know the experience of eating chocolate. Similarly, Nagel's analogy of the bat provides a strong case that objective science/physicalism cannot account for nor explain consciousness (which is a purely subjective view).

Question 3a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	20	30	49	1.3

Most students were able to clearly identify the objection Hume raises in the passage regarding the relationship between memory and identity and to link this to Locke's theory of personal identity. Low-scoring responses tended to be incomplete, explaining only Hume's claim in the passage, or did not answer the question, instead explaining Locke's view of personal identity.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Locke contends that memory is a necessary and sufficient condition of personal identity but Hume argues that because we lose so many memories this cannot constitute the self.

Question 3b.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	35	36	29	1.0

To answer this question successfully, students needed to be able to describe how, in Hume's account of identity, memory does not constitute personal identity but is rather the faculty used to construct a 'fictitious' personal identity, and to link this to the objection described in part 3a. of the question. Many students were able to describe how a lack of detailed memories linked to Hume's view on the role of memory in identity. Students who recounted Hume's argument against continuous identity and did not include the role of memory in the construction of identity could not be awarded full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

For Hume, personal identity is merely a bundle of perceptions we link through resemblance and causation, and memory giving each idea smooth transitions. Thus for Hume, though we lack detailed memories of huge parts of our lives, we still produce a 'fictitious' notion of self by having our memory link past perceptions and ideas.

Question 3c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	26	42	22	1.8

This question required students to identify whose view on the relationship between memory and identity they found most plausible and to provide a reason or reasons as to why. High-scoring responses did both of these tasks. Reasons given for supporting Hume's views typically related to the vagaries of memory and how, given the incompleteness of memory and its highly constructed nature, it seems more plausible that memory is a tool for constructing identity. Reasons given for supporting Locke's views tended to relate to the insufficiencies of Hume's views, particularly in relation to responsibility, and how Locke was able to address these insufficiencies. Answers that preferred the views of a particular philosopher solely for the reason that the other philosopher's views were problematic could not be awarded full marks. Nor could answers that evaluated the philosopher's general arguments relating to personal identity and did not address the role of memory in personal identity. It was not necessary for students to discuss both philosophers to be awarded full marks for the response.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> Hume's view is largely more convincing than Locke's. This is because Locke's argument of the 'sameness' of a rational being, as far as that consciousness may be extended backwards, merely discovers the notion of identity rather than proves it. The very identification of memories already infers an 'I', making it circular. Hume's view whilst not perfect aptly identifies that memory gives a deceiving 'union' in the imagination from resemblance and causation, the only inconstancy being why would one worry about a future if there is no coherent self? However, Hume puts this down to our memory linking perceptions.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	58	20	22	0.7

Question 4 asked students to provide a single reason as to why Aristotle believes that absolute precision in ethical inquiry is not possible. Although a variety of possible answers were deemed acceptable, the question was quite straightforward and many students who answered it were awarded full marks. Examples of acceptable answers include:

- because ethics is of a practical nature
- because the right thing to do varies
- because ethics is not a matter of knowledge but of practice
- because the mean is not always found at a precise midpoint between the vices of excess and deficiency.

Students who confused Aristotle's notion of virtue as 'relative to us' with a notion of subjectivity (what is virtuous is decided by the individual) could not be awarded full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> One reason Aristotle says that we should not expect absolute precision is that he believes that ethical inquiry is a practice unlike something like mathematics which is built on certainty and deductive logic, rather ethics is ever-changing and based on situation. We can't expect absolute precision, rather we create a virtuous character which we must habitually utilise to allow for greater accuracy.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	9	27	64	1.6

This question required students to draw on their knowledge of Callicles' arguments to support a claim about how he might respond to Aristotle's view that a virtuous life aims for a mean between the vices of excess and deficiency. Many students used Callicles' argument regarding pleasure to argue that his vision of a good life was one of excess rather than one spent attempting to achieve a virtuous mean. Other students argued a similar point but drew upon Callicles' arguments regarding natural right rather than pleasure. A small number of responses pointed out that Callicles would view Aristotle's arguments as akin to those of the weak masses who want to restrain the avarice of the strong. Low-scoring responses usually identified how Callicles would respond but gave no reason as to why he might respond in that way.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Callicles would disagree with Aristotle's argument. This is because for Callicles the 'superior' and 'virtuous life' – as human excellence – would not be aiming for the mean as rational moderation, but towards the excess of pleasure, self-indulgence, because that for Callicles is happiness; a life of sensual self indulgent freedom, in accordance with our human nature as being no different to an animal. Notably, Callicles would contend that the 'excess' of pleasure is not a 'vice' but a 'virtue', one which the superior individual aims for as opposed to the mean.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	16	35	28	21	1.6

The skill of evaluation, while challenging for students, was handled well by many students. Responses varied but included discussions of the ways in which seeking the mean may not result in a virtuous life because the mean is imprecise or difficult to establish, its utility is dependent on a strong sense of our own inclinations towards particular vices or because Aristotle's recommendations for how we might hit it could result in us living a life of vice rather than virtue. As to be expected, most students used courage as their example of virtue, although some chose pleasure, or the other virtues listed in Book II. Low-scoring responses tended to evaluate the mean without linking the evaluation to the idea of a virtuous life, or cited rather than used the example of virtue, or used an example that was not discussed by Aristotle. Responses that used examples that were not discussed by Aristotle usually demonstrated a misunderstanding of the mean as simply 'not too much or too little', rather than something specific to states of character.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

I would argue that Aristotle's account of seeking the mean does not always lead to the virtuous or best life. This is because his model fails to account for the often excess of spirit, will or courage that is evident in the best lives. For example, everyone would agree that Nelson Mandela lived a great and virtuous life, yet no one could say he did this by operating within the mean. Mandela's greatness came from not seeking the mean and instead pushing into the excess of courage. As such I would agree that Aristotle fails to account for the fact that many of the best lives come from pushing beyond the mean, not seeking it.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	65	23	12	0.5

Nietzsche rejects the notion of a single morality for all on the grounds that it ignores that there is 'an order of rank' between people. To impose a single morality would be to the detriment of those he refers to as 'higher men'.

Low-scoring responses typically confused Nietzsche's claim with a more generalised relativity ('because everyone is different') or provided a general discussion of slave morality.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> *One reason he provides for this is that there are different types of man, the noble and the herd/slave, and thus what is right for one of them will not be right for another. More specifically the values of the herd will restrain the higher man.*

Question 7a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	57	11	15	17	0.9

Towards the end of her essay 'Meaning in Life', Wolf acknowledges that her view regarding the importance of meaningfulness may be considered bourgeois, of concern only to persons from a 'certain place, time and social class'. The question asked students to outline how this challenges Wolf's view of meaningfulness and to support their explanation with an example. Many students found this a difficult question. Low-scoring responses suggested unfamiliarity with this part of Wolf's text and often mistook a potential criticism of Wolf's objective requirement for the objection Wolf identifies. High-scoring responses accurately identified the objection and so were able to provide an appropriate response, using examples such as homelessness, extreme poverty or displacement to highlight how those preoccupied with survival cannot concern themselves with the pursuit of Wolf's meaningfulness.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> *This bourgeois objection challenges meaningfulness as a criterion for the good life. And if one takes the example of a starving child in a war torn country meaningfulness is by no means their founding force, instead they would seek the basic necessities of survival. Thus showing how Wolf's criteria of meaningfulness could only apply to those fortunate enough to be 'persons from a certain place, time and social class' as otherwise pragmatic necessity would override meaning.*

Question 7b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	57	15	17	11	0.8

This question required students to make a judgment on the fairness of the criticism identified in part 7a. and to justify that judgment. Responses that took the view that the criticism was fair typically discussed how it was self-evident that those who struggled to acquire the basic necessities of life couldn't obtain what Wolf would identify as meaningful lives, making Wolf's views of relevance only to a very small number of people and overwhelmingly those in the developed world. Those who believed the criticism was unfair pointed to Wolf's own response; while it is certainly true that meaningfulness is only relevant to those who have

acquired life's necessities, this doesn't mean it isn't any less important to what it means to live well, often supporting this claim with further claims as to why meaningfulness is important.

A few high-scoring students pointed out that, rather than challenging Wolf's view, the criticism serves to highlight an issue with society; rather than re-evaluating Wolf's concept of meaningfulness we should instead focus on improving people's lives so meaningfulness is more accessible. Like in part 7a., low-scoring responses tended to suggest unfamiliarity with the criticism and so focused on the problems with Wolf's objective requirement, or provided responses that failed to recognise the criticism they were offering (for example, 'a person in the developing world might find meaningfulness in feeding their family') actually fulfils Wolf's understanding of meaningfulness.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

> *I argue that this criticism has its merit, but doesn't fully undermine Wolf's broader argument. It is fair to say that a starving child in a poor country would not attribute their lack of a good life to a lack of meaning and would probably testify to leading a good life if they had their basic needs met, even without meaning. However this doesn't deny that meaning is still a relevant criteria for a good life, evident as many wealthy and materially satisfied people say that something is missing from their life when it lacks meaning.*

Section B

Section B gave students the opportunity to apply their learning from Unit 3 in a considered way and to develop their own justified responses. In general, students worked well with the extracts and were able to discuss in relevant detail the argument presented in each. While students were able to identify a plausible position on the question from the perspective of each philosopher, many students did not provide any discussion as to why the philosopher held this position. While mid-range responses were generally able to provide well-developed discussions of the relevant philosophy in relation to the question, it was typically only high-scoring answers that provided a justified response to the question that went beyond simply identifying which philosopher was to be preferred and why.

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	5	10	13	16	16	15	11	7	3	1	4.7

The extract and question invited students to consider if reports of near-death experiences were sufficient evidence to conclude that mind-body dualism is true. Students that understood this were able to respond in a manner that was appropriate and effective. Some students, however, failed to observe that both the extract and the question were an invitation to discuss the veracity of dualism and instead discussed what each philosopher might think about near death-experiences.

Generally, students understood how Descartes' philosophy both supports, and is supported by, near-death experiences. Students typically developed their discussion by drawing on arguments from the Second and Sixth Meditations. Using Smart was more challenging for students. Students who were able to address this aspect of the question successfully often discussed how concluding that a near-death experience was not a brain state would put it outside known physical laws, thus rendering it a 'nomological dangler', and that, rather than supporting dualism, perhaps such experiences simply point to shortcomings in our understanding of the brain and in our scientific tools. Many students, while demonstrating a good understanding of Smart's arguments, struggled to plausibly apply this understanding to the extract and the question, arguing that a near-death experience is a brain state, despite the fact that the extract clearly states that the individuals concerned exhibit no brain activity. Other responses disregarded the question entirely and instead speculated on what Smart might think of near-death experiences. Responses that managed this part of the question well understood what was required and provided more than a statement on the question from the

perspective of the philosophy and did not include material from the philosophy that was not relevant to the discussion.

While many students were able to engage with the philosophy in a sustained way, the provision of a justified response often received cursory attention. Low-scoring to mid-range responses either merely provided a personal statement of belief, sometimes supported by further beliefs ('I believe NDEs are evidence that mind and body are distinct because I believe in a non-physical mind') rather than arguments, or picked a philosopher and proceeded to say why that philosopher's arguments were preferable. High-scoring responses drew from a wider evaluative engagement with the philosophers and concepts to provide a well-supported response to the question or used an evaluative discussion of the two philosophers to support a final position on the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

In the above passage the occurrence of NDEs has questioned the fundamental views of physicalism, as even without any 'consciousness' in terms of brain function and electrical impulses neuroscientists still find verifiable information, e.g. overhearing conversation. This passage hence argues that this shows consciousness must be separate from the body, hence mind-body dualism is true.

Smart, a mind-body identity theorist, views all sensations and consciousness as brain processes rather than anything 'over and above'. In response to these examples of NDEs , Smart would argue that these occurrences are by no means proof of mind-body dualism, but instead are brain processes which have not yet been explained through science. This view is justified by Smart through his use of 'nomological danglers' as he believes that if mind and body are indeed distinct, this is a singular fact which is unexplainable by current understandings of science, and as such would 'dangle', something which Smart says impels us to 'suspect a catch in'. Additionally, through Occam's Razor, Smart would reason that if these NDEs did show mind and body as distinct, they would introduce greater complexity and hence by the principle of parsimony these greater complexities would increase probability of inaccuracies and hence should be dismissed. Thus Smart would argue NDEs don't suggest dualism and are instead unexplained by current understanding but will be explained by physical science in the future.

Proffering a disparate opinion, Descartes would agree that NDEs prove mind-body dualism. Being a dualist, Descartes claims that the mind is wholly distinct from the body, as the mind is a thinking, non-extended entity whereas the body is a non-thinking, extended thing. As such, NDEs would support this distinction as because the body is corporeal, if the mind were also to be physical then this lack of brain processes would mean that no verifiable information could be obtained, as without a non-physical mind how could they possibly 'overhear conversations'. Thus, NDEs show that because there is no physical operation, the mind must be non-physical in order to have such information. As such, supporting mind-body dualism.

I would also agree with Descartes' conclusion that NDEs support dualist notions, as Smart's physicalist rebuttals are logically incoherent. Namely Smart's 'nomological dangler' does not disprove these notions, it's circular in nature as he presumes that physical science is 'the truth' and uses this assumption to reject anything that may argue against science, hence being erroneous in nature. Additionally his use of Occam's Razor presents a fundamental misunderstanding of its nature, as Occam's Razor can only be applied when both claims are equally contingent (either true or false) however the very existence of NDEs objects to the accuracy of physicalism. Thus, due to these objections I believe that the claims of NDEs support the mind-body distinction is far more cogent.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	5	8	12	15	16	17	12	6	3	1	4.7

In the second extract, students were presented with an experiment in which the brain of a roundworm is successfully uploaded to an autonomous android. The extract suggests that it would 'just be a matter of time' before it would be possible to replicate this experiment with humans. Students were asked to consider if an android running on an upload of 'your brain' would be 'you'.

Most students who answered the question were able to describe the argument presented in the extract and identify the assumption it made regarding the relationship between the brain and identity. To effectively manage the requirement to discuss Locke's view of the self, most students assumed that consciousness would necessarily attend the upload of the brain and many students explicitly pointed out that they were making this assumption. As with Question 1, students who were able to move beyond simply stating the philosophers' responses to the question and instead provide reasons for why they would respond this way were generally awarded marks in the mid to high range. Typically, when discussing Locke, students referred to the severed limb and/or the Prince and Cobbler thought experiment to respectively support the claims that the body is unnecessary for continuous identity and that the continuity of consciousness (if it should attend the brain) is both necessary and sufficient to conclude the android is you. When discussing Michaels, the example of riding a bike was a popular and effective choice, and one it seems that many students understood. Some students used the more general example of Schwanda or the Dr Nefarious thought experiment. While the latter was often used effectively, Schwanda, which is used by Michaels to introduce the problem rather than as an argument regarding the importance of the body to identity, usually resulted in some incoherence or imprecision.

Although most students who answered the question fully approached the final part of the response by providing an evaluative discussion of Locke and Michaels, generally they were able to bring the discussion back to the question, using their evaluative discussion to arrive at a response. This was an effective approach if the student avoided using their own beliefs to support their evaluation and there was coherence between the evaluative discussion and the conclusion in relation to the question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Does uploading the brain alone encompass identity as a whole? Locke argues that identity is founded entirely in continuation of consciousness and made evident by memory. For example, he argues that if the mind of a prince with all its thoughts and memories was transported into the body of a cobbler, the prince's identity would remain unchanged, therefore he would find that for as long as the roundworm retained its memories and its consciousness is continuous then its identity remains unchanged despite the destruction of its body. Locke rejects any significance of the body to personal identity. As such, my body could be destroyed and my mind could be uploaded and Locke would consider this to be me and fully encompass my identity.

Michaels contrasts this in that she finds some significance of the body to personal identity. Michaels argues that identity is a relation of psychological and physical connectedness, as such including both mind and body. She depicts this through her Schwanda example. Schwanda is a combination of Schwanda's mind and your body as a result of a steamroller accident. Michaels demonstrates that even though Schwanda might believe herself to be Wanda due to having Wanda's memories, this is not sufficient to accept that Schwanda is Wanda. For example, Schwanda might remember riding a bike as Wanda but Michaels identifies that minds alone do not ride bikes. Wanda who rode the bike has specific mind body relations that Schwanda does not have. This can be likened to a digital upload of one's mind. One might possess the same memories but this cannot be sufficient for having unchanged identity.

Michaels successfully demonstrates the circularity of Locke's claim in it does seem evident that identity presupposes memory just as memory presupposes identity. Therefore memory cannot be sufficient evidence of identity. In addition she also successfully exhibits our connection to our body. It seems that destruction of the body through uploading the self cannot leave identity unaffected because the mind-body connection has not been completely uploaded. If only my brain was to be uploaded then my muscle memory, environmental familiarity, gut feelings and even physical triggers of anxiety would be disrupted. For example, the smell of spring or the sound of arguing might trigger my body and mind in a particular way. This, however is disrupted by uploading only the brain and destroying the body. There seems to be an undeniable significance of the body for identity. For example, a painter or athlete might find their whole sense of self and identity ruined by this variation in mind-body connection. Therefore it seems that simply uploading the mind cannot be sufficient for the continuation of identity.

Section C

Option	N / R	1	2
%	1	43	56

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	2	1	3	4	5	5	7	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	6	4	3	2	1	1	0.5	9.4

Section C of the examination provided students with two accessible extracts that between them allowed students to utilise any one of the Unit 4 philosophers in their discussion. Question 1 was less popular with students. Those who selected this question tended to prefer to use the viewpoints and arguments of Aristotle over those of Plato, specifically those arguments relating to the mean. While this could be an effective choice, offering students the opportunity for greater nuance of discussion than perhaps Plato, many students made the error of conflating the mean, which specifically relates to virtue, with the broader notion of not engaging in something too much or too little. Those who chose Plato were immediately able to see the relationship between the 'hedonic treadmill' cultivated by rapid technological advancement and Socrates' critique of Callicles' recommendations for the good life. When discussed with sufficient detail, this resulted in focused, effective essays.

Question 2 utilised a popular talking point from 2023 – the development of ChatGPT – to invite students to consider the relationship between such technology and the good life. Students who chose to draw on Wolf's arguments to support their discussion generally considered how such technology might compromise our opportunities for meaning, with more nuanced discussions also thinking about how, by removing menial tasks from our lives and freeing up our time, ChatGPT may actually support our pursuit of activities and projects that give meaning to our lives. Nietzsche proved to be a more challenging choice. For many students, the decision to use the noble and slave moralities as grounds for discussing a potential threat that generative AI presents for the good life tended to be far less effective than drawing on Nietzsche's claims regarding the importance of suffering and how, by diminishing our suffering, such technology threatens our capacity for greatness.

Whichever question students selected, the qualities of high-scoring responses remained the same. These were essays that made detailed and specific use of the extracts throughout; developed, from the extracts and the chosen philosophy, a precise and plausible contention through which to discuss the issues raised in the extract; and utilised the philosophy as a means to further the discussion, rather than simply including it because it was a requirement. Responses that were less effective tended to ignore the extract, writing instead more broadly on technology and happiness (Question 1) or on the threat technology may pose to the good life (Question 2), or discussing the extract in the introduction before proceeding to write an essay in which it was not referred to again. Appropriate management of the philosophical viewpoints and arguments

was also a problem. Some students included very little philosophy whereas others included it without discrimination, resulting in essays that were unfocused or incoherent. There was also the issue of students including what were essentially approximations or caricatures of the philosophers' arguments. This was particularly the case with Aristotle's mean, Nietzsche's noble and slave morality and Wolf's notion of reasons of love. Students are reminded that a nuanced and accurate grasp of the arguments is essential, not just for the expositive component of the essay, but to ensure that evaluations are plausible and effective.

On that note, evaluation continues to be challenging for many students and an aspect of the essay that tends to be addressed in a cursory manner, usually with a short paragraph before the conclusion. High-scoring essays engaged in sustained critical discussion, testing ideas through the employment of effective examples and compelling counterarguments. While students tended to avoid supporting their evaluative claims with personal beliefs, there was a noticeable dearth of examples employed by students, even in what might be considered mid-scoring responses. Students are reminded that, aside from the fact that examples are an effective way to illustrate claims and test arguments, they are explicitly included in the marking rubric for this part of the examination.

The following is a high-scoring response to Question 2. Although there are moments where the essay becomes unfocused, particularly in the fourth paragraph, overall the essay is notable for its deep engagement with the extract, its use of detailed philosophical arguments to develop the response and its thoughtful developed critical discussion, supported by the sustained example of debating.

As AI algorithms and ChatGPT enter the public consciousness, should we be wary or supportive of its place and role within the good life? Brook contends that necessary to the good life is living life actively and engaging with life in a certain way, mentioning the 'written word' as the 'highest form of human expression'. Yet ChatGPT and the 'digital age' at large 'has turned us lazy'. By flooding us with the easy opportunity to 'request about almost everything', we are encouraging passivity. Moreover, Brook includes Emily Bell, a former director of digital content, to raise the issue of how AI will undermine a sound society because 'bad actors' can 'autogenerate the most astounding amount of misleading bilge, smothering reality'. Is Brook's pessimism justified? In this essay, I will critically discuss Wolf's likely view on ChatGPT and how it can affect our ability to live well.

Wolf in all likelihood would share Brook's concern over ChatGPT and the type of life it promotes. This is the case for Wolf because good lives are ones in which individuals place the irreducible domain of value – 'meaningfulness', separate from 'happiness/welfare and 'morality' – as an important part of their lives. It is through a meaningful life that is pursued by reasons of love – love for others or for impersonal activities, e.g. philosophy or basketball – that Wolf contends we can live lives which are exciting or gripping. Wolf outlines her conception of meaningfulness as 'loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way'. This looks like feelings of fulfillment being engendered from the activities we partake in and arising partly from the independent value of the activities we love. Moreover for Wolf, the subjective condition of 'loving' something will not suffice for meaningfulness, because the source of our fulfillment matters, as seen with Sisyphus rolling a boulder up forever or a woman whose world revolves around her goldfish. Hence Wolf would likely be dismayed over what ChatGPT encourages; people likely use it out of self-interest and pleasure (e.g by writing thank you notes to his wedding guests), yet for Wolf the pursuit of our passions is distinct from this pursuit of pleasure. Indeed Wolf would likely suggest that ChatGPT distorts the way in which we pursue our passions and interests. As opposed to once sending thank you notes and expressing our love for others, ChatGPT makes it all too easy to simply send personalized thank you notes with a few simple instructions. Moreover, Wolf claims that our passions expose us to pain and vulnerability, yet this partly gives meaningfulness its distinctive value and separates it from pleasure and self-interest. Hence the move towards activities that do not promote this type of vulnerability (e.g. Chat GPT generating thank you notes as opposed to putting yourself through the vulnerability of saying real and truly meaningful things to your loved ones) is likely for Wolf to engender a society in which individuals are not living meaningful lives.

In my view, I find Wolf's view compelling.

Firstly, love as a central motivation within our lives seems valid and important, especially as Wolf connects it to being 'gripped' and 'excited'. For example, debating is a hobby of mine that I did every week this year, and when I rebut or write arguments down, I truly feel like I am not only pursuing what I am excellent at and fulfilled by, but what is developing my individual greatness in accordance with my own individual abilities. Moreover, that Wolf discusses the vulnerability of love also seems important, because often our lives and difficult situations are given value, and indeed 'ennobled' because of the pain we went through. Our love for others gives value to grief, and so too does my love and passion for debating give value to the hundreds of hours and late nights over these recent years, which were largely 'immediately' unpleasant. This itself confirms that what we love often requires suffering.

While Wolf's objective condition seems initially desirable because of examples like the woman who loves her goldfish, I contend that such examples shift away from the criterion by which our worth (or lack thereof) is truly determined. In these cases, it seems that the individuals are denying their vast possibilities. With the entirety of their potential in their hands, choosing to love a goldfish over a person or hobby seems like limiting your potential. This is related to the importance of 'making sense of your fate'. Sisyphus has not made sense of his fate when he is deluded or rolling a boulder up a hill; he hasn't recognised with will, authenticity and integrity what his life stands for. This is in contrast to the monk or the artist whose love for their objects, while not having value beyond their subjective experience, is still what we are apt to call meaningful because they have willingly chosen their activities and placed their love in this activities after having grasped their potential as humans and directed that potential to something they love.

In my view, ChatGPT undermines our ability to pursue passions freely because ChatGPT encourages activities that are not pursued out of love. This is seen when writing thank you notes, but also with students. By writing exams and 'receiving a written answer seconds later', they do not put themselves through the struggle of academic work, and possibility finding a passion for a subject, because ChatGPT did it for them. This is worsened by the fact that ChatGPT is not just a 'tool but an inducement', to quote Albert Borgmann, philosopher of technology. ChatGPT isn't just a neutral tool but something we are increasingly coaxed to use. Indeed, students use it not just for homework, but when their passions get difficult, they already know about the abilities of ChatGPT and use it. Indeed, I and many other debaters used ChatGPT for preparing topics, removing the excitement and gripping enjoyment from researching the topic.

Moreover, ChatGPT undermines our creativity. Love itself seemingly requires a high degree of creativity, understood as calling upon something within yourself and creating something (whether it be 'creating' good debate or nourishing good relationships). By providing unlimited assistance and 'endless content opportunities', our passions and what we enjoy loses the discipline and hard work to truly get to our destination. Yet this journey is precisely ennobling; suffering places value on these difficult times, as I contended before.

Furthermore, ChatGPT effects our emotional regulation with our passions, making us anxious and unappreciative. This is as John O'Donohue in 'Divine Love' contends in which ChatGPT as part of the 'digital virus [has] truncated time and space'. Chat GPT removes the natural sequence of our passions, for example by opening a cookbook, reading a recipe, learning it and trying to determine what ingredients need to be replaced because we don't have certain things, and instead 'truncates' the journey by making it incredibly easy to find these replacements. This has two negative implications. Firstly, we lose patience with our love; greedy for destination and thereby undermining the value we place upon pursuing our passions for the passion itself. Secondly, in terms of 'making sense of our fate' this itself requires a willful and authentic relationship with oneself and our reality; we need to be attentive to it. Yet by distorting this attentiveness and our relationship to our passions and our motivations, which conflates self-interest/desires for immediate pleasure with love, we lose our ability to truly realise the place our passions have within our lives and the appreciation we have for them.

However, ChatGPT can and does lead to new ways to produce our creative visions. For example, we can use it to ask for related activities about things we love. If I love debating, I can ask it to recommend to me similar activities. Similarly, ChatGPT may provide me the time to pursue my passions; this is valid to an extent. Yet humans inherently have biological reward systems that are too easily satiated by things that provide immediate gratification. Hence ChatGPT in a way deploys these systems, and thereby shifts us away from our passions to things like TV, away from our creative visions.

Therefore, while ChatGPT may be beneficial in pursuing our passions, its place and role must be limited if we are to live well and in particular, meaningfully.