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EDUCATION

SAMPLE QUESTIONS
One question from each section of this exam, with its marking scheme, so teachers can see what the full paper is like. Full exam and solutions: captivateeducation.com.au/trial-exams

Philosophy

Question and Answer Book

Practice examination 1 – 2027

- Reading time is 15 minutes
- Writing time is 2 hours

Materials supplied

- Question and Answer Book

Instructions

- Use the additional space at the end of this book if you need extra space to complete an answer.

Students are not permitted to bring mobile phones and/or any unauthorised electronic devices into the examination room.

Contents

Section A (4 questions, 40 marks)

Section B (1 of 3 questions, 20 marks)

Assessment criteria

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Section A

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided.
- Write your responses in English.
- Each question in Section A is worth 10 marks, to be assessed holistically and with no specific mark allocation for each question part. Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out at the end of this book.

Sample – Question 1 of the 4 questions in this section.

Question 1 (10 marks)

Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. Such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

From the point of view of self-sufficiency the same result seems to follow; for the final good is thought to be self-sufficient. … the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others … Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.

Source: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chapter 7, trans. WD Ross, 1908 (public domain); prescribed edition: trans. David Ross, rev. Lesley Brown, Oxford World's Classics, 2009, Book I, Chapter 7

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a. With reference to the passage above, explain why Aristotle claims that happiness is 'final without qualification' and 'self-sufficient'.

b. How might **one** other thinker studied in Unit 3 respond to Aristotle's claim that we choose pleasure 'for the sake of happiness'?

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c. Can a person be happy without living a good life? Provide your own justified response to this question. Support your reasoning with an example.

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Section B

Instructions

- Write an essay in response to one of the following questions in the space provided.
- Write your response in English.
- The question in Section B is worth 20 marks, to be assessed holistically according to the assessment criteria set out at the end of this book.

Sample – Question 1 of the 3 questions in this section.

Question 1 (20 marks)

Is it ever right to stop listening to someone we disagree with?
Discuss this question using viewpoints and arguments from **two** thinkers studied in Unit 4, using a case study you have studied this year as your central example.

Write your essay on the ruled pages that follow the last essay question.

OR

End of sample questions

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Assessment criteria

Section A

Each of the four 10-mark questions in Section A will be assessed against the following criteria:

- understanding of philosophical concepts, arguments, viewpoints and/or perspectives, as expressed within the extract / set texts and as relevant to the demands of the question
- understanding of connections, similarities and differences between arguments, viewpoints or perspectives, as expressed within the extract / set texts and as relevant to the demands of the question
- evaluation and/or critical comparison of relevant arguments, viewpoints or perspectives, and/or the formulation of a justified philosophical position that addresses the demands of the question
- plausibility, coherence and development of a reasoned and supported response that addresses the specific demands of the question
- use of clear and precise language appropriate to philosophy

Section B

The 20-mark essay response in Section B will be assessed against the following criteria:

- knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, viewpoints, arguments and perspectives, as expressed in the set texts and relevant to the topic
- evaluation and critical comparison of arguments, viewpoints or perspectives as relevant, and formulation of a justified philosophical position in response to the topic
- knowledge and use of a relevant case study
- plausibility, coherence and development of a reasoned and supported discussion that addresses the specific demands of the topic and integrates relevant material
- use of clear and precise language appropriate to philosophy

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Marking scheme for the sample questions

Section A

Question 1a. (3 marks)

With reference to the passage above, explain why Aristotle claims that happiness is 'final without qualification' and 'self-sufficient'.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

explain, using the passage, Aristotle's two criteria for the chief good and why happiness meets both.

Question 1 is marked holistically out of 10 against the five Section A criteria; marks are not awarded to parts. The 3 / 3 / 4 split is notional, for the marks record and AssessHub only.

High-scoring responses:

Common errors: treating happiness as a feeling of pleasure (the passage lists pleasure among the goods chosen for the sake of happiness); explaining finality without self-sufficiency; summarising the function argument or the doctrine of the mean instead of using the passage.

Stimulus specification. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7 (1097a30–b21), quoted from WD Ross's 1908 translation (public domain). Prescribed edition: trans. David Ross, rev. Lesley Brown, Oxford World's Classics 2009, Book I Chapter 7 (set). The box runs from 'Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit' to 'for anything other than itself.', then from 'From the point of view of self-sufficiency', with two omissions (marked …), to 'and is the end of action.' The passage sets out the two formal criteria of the chief good — finality and self-sufficiency — immediately before the function argument. Brown's revision modernises some of Ross's wording; check the box against the class copy and substitute the OWC wording if preferred (the stems quote phrases common to both).

Expected qualities for Question 1 (U3AOS1 (general question: What is the nature of happiness and what is its role in the good life?).):

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Marks	Expected qualities for this question
9–10	Precise, insightful, convincing: an exact account of both criteria using the passage's three grades of finality and its definition of self-sufficiency; a well-chosen Unit 3 thinker whose response to the ordering of pleasure and happiness is explained through their own concepts and connected back to Aristotle; a convincing position on happiness and the good life tested against a specific example and a counterargument.
7–8	Knowledgeable, competent, effective: both criteria explained with clear use of the passage; a relevant thinker with a reasoned response; a supported position with an example.
5–6	Clear, generally sound: finality explained, self-sufficiency thin; a thinker described more than applied; a position with uneven support.
3–4	Basic, uneven: a general summary of Aristotle on happiness with little reference to the passage; a thinker outlined without a response to Aristotle; an assertion in part c.
1–2	Simplistic or inaccurate: happiness treated as pleasure or a feeling; no thinker or position.
0	Transcription of the passage only, or an irrelevant response.

Mark allocation: Holistic: Question 1 is marked out of 10 against the descriptors given under part a (U3AOS1 (general question: What is the nature of happiness and what is its role in the good life?).).

Responses could have included:

- distinguished the three grades of finality in the passage: what is pursued only for the sake of something else; what is chosen both for itself and for something else ('honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue'); and what is chosen 'always for itself and never for the sake of something else' — only happiness occupies the last place
- used the passage's reasoning about the other goods: we would choose them even 'if nothing resulted from them', yet we also choose them 'judging that by means of them we shall be happy', whereas no one chooses happiness for the sake of these
- explained self-sufficiency as 'that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing', and why happiness is 'not counted as one good thing among others' — it is the complete good of which the other goods are parts, so nothing added to it makes it better
- connected both criteria to the conclusion that happiness is 'the end of action', the target at which practical life aims

Sample full-mark response

> Aristotle argues that the chief good must be final without qualification: something we choose always for itself and never for the sake of anything else. Honour, pleasure, reason and the virtues do not meet this test. We would choose them even 'if nothing resulted from them', but we also choose them 'for the sake of happiness', because we judge that through them we will be happy. Happiness alone is never chosen as a means to these things. It is also self-sufficient, because 'when isolated' it makes a life 'lacking in nothing'. It is not one good on a list that could be improved by adding another; it is the complete good that the other goods help make up. So happiness is both final and self-sufficient, and is 'the end of action'.

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Question 1b. (3 marks)

*How might **one** other thinker studied in Unit 3 respond to Aristotle's claim that we choose pleasure 'for the sake of happiness'?*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

select one other Unit 3 thinker and explain how, and why, that thinker would respond to Aristotle's claim that pleasure is chosen for the sake of happiness.

Question 1 is marked holistically out of 10 against the five Section A criteria; marks are not awarded to parts. The 3 / 3 / 4 split is notional, for the marks record and AssessHub only.

High-scoring responses chose a thinker whose view bears on the relationship between pleasure and happiness, for example:

Common errors: describing the thinker's view of pleasure without connecting it to Aristotle's ordering of ends; presenting Callicles simply as 'pro-pleasure' without his account of natural justice and the strong; choosing a thinker not studied in Unit 3.

Mark allocation: Holistic: Question 1 is marked out of 10 against the descriptors given under part a (U3AOS1 (general question: What is the nature of happiness and what is its role in the good life?).).

Responses could have included:

- **Callicles** (Plato, *Gorgias*) — would reverse the order: the happy life is one in which desires 'wax to the uttermost' and are satisfied, so pleasure is not a means to happiness but what happiness consists in; Socrates' reply (the leaky jars; the pleasure 'which isn't good') sides with Aristotle in ranking pleasures
- **Nietzsche** — would treat comfortable wellbeing as a herd goal; the higher type chooses hardship and 'the discipline of great suffering', so neither pleasure nor happiness as commonly understood is the final end — the enhancement of the type is
- **Mill** (Unit 3 extract) — need not dispute that people pursue happiness, but would insist that each person is 'the proper guardian' of their own good, so the ordering of pleasures belongs to the individual pursuing 'our own good in our own way', not to a theory of the human good
- **Wolf** — would agree that many non-moral goods (cooking, music, sport) are chosen for their own sake and belong in a good life, and would resist any single ideal that subordinates them all to one end

Sample full-mark response

> Callicles would reject Aristotle's ordering. In the *Gorgias* he claims that a person who would truly live should let his desires grow as large as possible and have the courage and intelligence to satisfy them; this, he says, is virtue and happiness. On his view pleasure is not chosen 'for the sake of' happiness, as if it were a step towards something higher: the satisfaction of desire simply is happiness, and restraint is a convention the weak use against the strong. Aristotle places pleasure among goods we choose partly as means to a complete life of virtuous activity. So the disagreement

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> is about what happiness is — for Aristotle an activity of the soul over a complete life, for Callicles a continual filling of desire, which is why Socrates can answer him with the image of the leaky jars.

Question 1c. (4 marks)

Can a person be happy without living a good life? Provide your own justified response to this question. Support your reasoning with an example.

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

take and justify a position on whether a person can be happy without living a good life, supported by an example.

Question 1 is marked holistically out of 10 against the five Section A criteria; marks are not awarded to parts. The 3 / 3 / 4 split is notional, for the marks record and AssessHub only.

High-scoring responses recognised the shift from the passage's claim that happiness is the final end to the question of how happiness relates to the good life, and:

Common errors: no example, or Aristotle's own examples; asserting that happiness 'is subjective' without argument; restating part a.

Mark allocation: Holistic: Question 1 is marked out of 10 against the descriptors given under part a (U3AOS1 (general question: What is the nature of happiness and what is its role in the good life?).).

Responses could have included:

- stated a clear position (no; yes; or 'in one sense of happiness but not another') and argued for it
- distinguished happiness as a feeling of contentment or satisfaction from happiness as flourishing over a whole life, and used that distinction rather than simply asserting one
- tested the position with a specific example of their own (a person content in a comfortable but empty routine; someone cheerful while exploiting others; a person who flourishes through hardship) and answered a counterargument
- drew on Aristotle and the part b thinker where useful, without repeating part b

Sample full-mark response

> Whether someone can be happy without living a good life depends on what we mean by happiness, and the more important sense rules it out. Consider a man who spends twenty years in a comfortable routine — a job he does not care about, evenings on his phone, no close friends — and says he is content. The feeling is real. But if happiness is what makes a life 'lacking in nothing', his life lacks a great deal: friendship, developed abilities, anything chosen for its own worth. If he later saw this, he would not say his earlier life had been happy after all, only pleasant. Someone might object that it is arrogant to tell people they are not happy. Yet we already distinguish feeling satisfied

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> from having reason to be satisfied. So a person can feel happy without living a good life, but cannot be happy in the full sense without one.

Section B

Question 1. (20 marks)

Is it ever right to stop listening to someone we disagree with?
*Discuss this question using viewpoints and arguments from **two** thinkers studied in Unit 4, using a case study you have studied this year as your central example.*

To be awarded full marks, students were required to:

discuss the question as it applies to their own case study, using viewpoints and arguments from two Unit 4 thinkers and reaching a justified position.

The question asks whether withdrawing our attention from a person or a view can ever be justified, joining the U4AOS1 questions about disagreement (What should we do in light of others holding beliefs that disagree with our beliefs?) and about our responsibilities in belief. High-scoring essays distinguished ceasing to engage with an argument, refusing someone a platform and excluding a person from an epistemic community, and asked who decides and on what grounds.

Unit 4 thinkers that fit (any two, chosen for this question):

- **Mill** — silencing an opinion assumes our own infallibility; a false opinion may contain part of the truth and keeps a true one from becoming ‘dead dogma’; supports continuing to listen, though students could ask whether his grounds cover bad-faith repetition rather than argument
- **Nguyen** — in an echo chamber outside voices are actively discredited, so refusing to listen is the mechanism of entrapment; but where a source exploits our trust, ceasing to rely on it can be the beginning of escape
- **M Fricker** — refusing to listen to a speaker because of identity prejudice is testimonial injustice; the virtue of testimonial justice asks us to notice why we discount someone
- **Peirce** — turning ‘with contempt and hatred’ from anything that might disturb a belief is the method of tenacity, which the social impulse undermines
- **E Fricker** — we may rationally decline to defer to a speaker we have good grounds to think is not better placed than we are

Case studies that work (with the precise instances inside them that high-scoring essays used):

- *Silencing, exclusion and cancelling*: Kathleen Stock and the University of Sussex — student protests in October 2021 over her published views on sex and gender identity, and her resignation later that month; whether colleagues and students were right to stop listening, and whether Mill’s grounds apply
- *Misinformation, disinformation and echo chambers*: the misidentification of the Bondi Junction attacker in April 2024, when posts on X falsely named a university student; whether users and platforms should stop amplifying accounts that spread the claim

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- *Truth, trust, credibility and expertise*: the UK Post Office Horizon scandal, in which sub-postmasters who said the accounting software was faulty were not believed for more than a decade

Structure: High-scoring essays were about the case study: they opened with a precise instance, used the two thinkers to analyse it and set one against the other, and reached a qualified position (for example, that we may stop relying on a source but not stop hearing a person's argument, or only when listening would itself spread harm).

The essay is marked holistically against the five Section B criteria.

Common errors: an essay about Mill and Nguyen with the case study as decoration; treating 'stop listening' as 'ban' without argument; general claims about 'social media' in place of instances; thinkers chosen in advance rather than for this question.

Mark allocation: Criteria (published band maxima): knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts, viewpoints, arguments and perspectives, as expressed in the set texts and relevant to the topic (10); evaluation and critical comparison of arguments, viewpoints or perspectives as relevant, and formulation of a justified philosophical position in response to the topic (10); knowledge and use of a relevant case study (10); plausibility, coherence and development of a reasoned and supported discussion that addresses the specific demands of the topic and integrates relevant material (5); use of clear and precise language appropriate to philosophy (5).
Practice band guide (derived from the criteria): 18–20: An essay about the case study: precise instances, two astutely chosen Unit 4 thinkers accurately represented and set against each other, sustained evaluation with counterarguments, a convincing justified position.; 14–17: A focused, well-supported essay: the case study used with specific instances, thinkers accurate and applied to it, evaluation developed through the essay, a clear position.; 10–13: A generally sound essay: the case study discussed in general terms, thinkers outlined then applied, evaluation mostly in the conclusion.; 6–9: A basic, largely descriptive essay: the texts summarised with the case study added, or the case described with little philosophy; assertion rather than argument.; 1–5: Very limited: inaccurate or caricatured thinkers, no relevant case study, no position.; 0: Transcription of the prompt only, or an entirely irrelevant response.

Responses could have included:

- **Mill** — silencing an opinion assumes our own infallibility; a false opinion may contain part of the truth and keeps a true one from becoming 'dead dogma'; supports continuing to listen, though students could ask whether his grounds cover bad-faith repetition rather than argument
- **Nguyen** — in an echo chamber outside voices are actively discredited, so refusing to listen is the mechanism of entrapment; but where a source exploits our trust, ceasing to rely on it can be the beginning of escape
- **M Fricker** — refusing to listen to a speaker because of identity prejudice is testimonial injustice; the virtue of testimonial justice asks us to notice why we discount someone
- **Peirce** — turning 'with contempt and hatred' from anything that might disturb a belief is the method of tenacity, which the social impulse undermines
- **E Fricker** — we may rationally decline to defer to a speaker we have good grounds to think is not better placed than we are

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- *Silencing, exclusion and cancelling*: Kathleen Stock and the University of Sussex — student protests in October 2021 over her published views on sex and gender identity, and her resignation later that month; whether colleagues and students were right to stop listening, and whether Mill's grounds apply
- *Misinformation, disinformation and echo chambers*: the misidentification of the Bondi Junction attacker in April 2024, when posts on X falsely named a university student; whether users and platforms should stop amplifying accounts that spread the claim
- *Truth, trust, credibility and expertise*: the UK Post Office Horizon scandal, in which sub-postmasters who said the accounting software was faulty were not believed for more than a decade

Sample full-mark response

> Sample opening: When posts on X falsely named a university student as the Bondi Junction attacker in April 2024, thousands of users faced the choice this question describes: whether to keep listening to the accounts that had spread the claim. Mill would warn that refusing to hear an opinion assumes our own infallibility. But the Bondi case was not a contest of opinions; it was the rapid spread of a falsehood by sources that had exploited their followers' trust, the mechanism Nguyen calls an echo chamber. I will argue that it can be right to stop relying on a source, but that Mill is right that we should not stop hearing an argument, and that the case shows the difference matters.

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