Section A

Epistemology is the philosophical inquiry into the study of knowledge and belief.

Question 1

Most papers accurately described the basic features of Scepticism and referred to a philosopher to support their view. For example, some candidates referred to Cartesian Skepticism and were able give a good account of Descartes' methodology. Other philosophers mentioned included Hume, Locke and Plato.

Question 2

Induction and deduction are distinctive kinds of reasoning that are used in philosophy. Most candidates were able to articulate the difference between the types and note that logic and mathematics is almost always deductive whereas science and ordinary life is more common. Many papers provided examples and referred to philosophers who supported the different types of reasoning.

Question 3

The papers identified a philosopher who might support this view and explained their view. More advanced papers also identified the alternative view and explored the merits of both approaches. Some of the better answers explained whether a particular philosopher would have agreed or not with the statement. For example, some candidates explained that Hume believed knowledge to be best obtained via the senses and so, in that respect, the quote was correct, knowledge would be relative to the individual. Other candidates made use of Plato's views regarding the need for knowledge to be eternal and unchangeable and noted that he would therefore disagree with the quote. Other philosophers mentioned included Locke, Descartes and Kant.

Question 4

Criterion 1

Most responses referred to the statement provided and identified that a materialist would agree with the statement. Strong responses referred back to the statement within a conclusion. The overall responses for materialism were not as comprehensive as those for Question 5.
Criterion 2

Better responses included specific concepts within the response. The range of concepts that were used included functionalism, behaviourism, bundle theory, identity theory, Ockham’s razor, neuroscience, category mistake, evolution. Philosophers referred to included Hume, Ryle, Putnam, Churchlands, Dawkins, and Dennett.

Criterion 3

Some response presented an effective argument in standard form. Others gave an effective reasoned argument as to why an/some of the, arguments for materialism supported materialism e.g. neuroscience and an example of changed self, due to brain damage etc.; how evolution can explain a sophisticated brain; how functionalism or behaviourism explains qualities attributed to the mind. Any of these methods of addressing criterion 3 were rewarded.

Question 5

Criterion 1

Most responses referred to the statement provided and identified that a dualist would agree with the statement. Strong responses referred to the statement within a conclusion. This question produced a more comprehensive response overall than Question 4.

Criterion 2

Most responses reflected at least a basic understanding of dualism. Better responses included specific concepts within the response. The range of concepts that were used included substance dualism, property dualism Cartesian dualism, qualia, privileged access, near death experiences, interactionism, a descriptor of thought experiments e.g. Chalmers’ philosophical zombies; Jackson’s Mary and Searle’s Chinese room. Philosophers referred to included Descartes, Chalmers, Jackson, Searle, and Nagel.

Some responses made a distinction between substance and property dualism and that both may hold a slightly different position on the statement provided.

Criterion 3

This was addressed in a number of ways: Some responses presented an effective argument in standard form. Another option was to explain what the descriptor of a thought experiment suggests about existence of a mind and or soul. Others explained the reasoning as to why qualia, privileged access, near death experiences, for example, supports dualism.

Any of these methods of addressing criterion 3 were rewarded.

General comment for both questions: Responses that gave a personal opinion that was also supported by sound reasoning were rewarded, responses that identified that a science or faith based position was the only justifiable position, needed to show the reasoning for holding such a position rather than simply stating the position as fact.
Please note; the Philosophers and concepts identified above represent those used within candidate responses and are not meant to be seen as a prescriptive list.

Generally candidates are to be commended for addressing such open questions in a limited time frame and providing in the main, well considered responses, particularly for Question 5.

**Question 6**

Many candidates did not offer a direct comparison of the cosmological and design argument, this is likely because they would have been expecting a question comparing them with evolution or the big bang. Candidates were not penalised for this, but those who could give a comprehensive analysis of both arguments and compare them were rewarded.

Many candidates did a good job explaining the classical explanations of the design/cosm arguments. Aquinas’s ‘five ways’ and Paley’s teleological argument were the most commonly cited positions, and were often set out in standard form. Modern philosopher’s such as Swinburne or Hawking were less commonly cited.

Although many candidates were successful in citing these arguments, not everyone was able to clearly offer a logical critique or endorsement of them. Candidates who could offer a clear critique of certain arguments and then present strong counter arguments were rewarded on both criterion 3 and 4.

Time management may have been an issue for some candidates. Clearly some candidates ran out of time and trailed off. On the other hand, some papers were unnecessarily long, with candidates seemingly writing everything they knew about the topic. Candidates were not necessarily punished for this, but a number of the top papers are notable for their brevity. A succinct response with a clear argument is something to strive for.

**Question 7**

Much of what is written above applies here too. Clearly some candidates were not expecting to have to respond to this particular question and instead discussed the scientific method vs faith-based belief systems. Paley and Aquinas were the most commonly cited philosophers.

Generally a high standard of answer, candidates were able to explain in detail either one of or both the cosmological and teleological arguments for god’s existence. Importantly, many candidates included information on the scientific explanations (of the origins of the universe and of life) and were able to effectively compare and contrast these with the religious explanations for the origins of the universe and of human life.

**Criterion 1**

Take care to use paragraphing effectively, some candidates did not use paragraphs at all.
Criterion 2

Better answers contained explanations of concepts rather than just mentioning the concept - eg an explanation of Paley's design argument might explain that it is the complexity, order, functionality of the watch which gives it the hallmarks of design, in Paley's view.

Criterion 3

Many candidates made good use of standard form syllogisms to show the logical steps of a particular argument. Others used sentences to ‘unpick’ the key points of an argument and this approach also worked well for cr3.

Criterion 4

Better answers used reflective statements, questions and sophisticated language to weigh up the worth or efficacy of individual arguments and specific points within arguments. Excellent answers might use a standard form syllogism and then debate the reliability/accuracy of a nominated premise. For example:

p1 - everything with a beginning must have a cause:

A candidate might then go on to discuss possible exceptions to this rule and the conflicting view on whether there are exceptions, or whether, if there are exceptions, the question regarding whether these exceptions significantly weaken the argument.

Question 8

Better answers used this question as a launch-pad to discuss the issue of faith vs science. As personal revelation is not covered in the course, candidates were not required to show knowledge of that in their answers. Most answers were able to discuss the idea of science making use of physical evidence and most pinpointed this as a difference between religious answers and scientific answers. Some candidates were able to give a good account of why religious answers might be seen as providing meaningful response to some of the questions around the origins of life and the universe in a way which science currently cannot.

Question 9

By far the majority of candidates attempted this question and generally it was done reasonably well. The open ended nature of the question meant that it could be approached from the perspective of any philosopher or philosophy. Most candidates chose a combination of Hard Determinist, Compatibilist or Libertarian perspectives. Candidates, generally, were able to articulate one or more of these successfully usually supported with sound arguments. See criterion breakdown for further general comments.
Question 10

Far fewer candidates attempted this question and candidates appeared to either answer reasonably well or somewhat struggle with addressing the question. Too few candidates directly used a Soft Determinist stance in their response and with subsequent evaluation from a Libertarian or Hard Determinist perspective. Too often candidates attempted to mainly discuss using Hard Determinist philosophy as their thread or worse confusing Hard and Soft determinism. Candidates are warned that examples should be used to support arguments rather than be treated as arguments in themselves. See criterion breakdown for further general comments.

Criterion 1

In addition to correct English usage credit was given for overall structure, interlinking between ideas and arguments, use of philosophical terms and conventions, and how clear, convincing and well supported the arguments were.

Criterion 2

Candidates were assessed on their ability to choose, exemplify and explain pertinent philosophical concepts and ideas. This included the appropriate use of thought experiments.

Criterion 3

This criterion was assessed through the insight and clarity of explanations of arguments and their logic. The implications and reasoning behind of thought experiments needed to be outlined clearly to warrant consideration for this criterion.

Criterion 4

In order to achieve in this, most difficult, criterion candidates are required to identify, compare and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments they assert. Candidates should attempt to explicitly communicate their evaluation of each argument using alternate philosophies. In addition, candidates should ensure their overall evaluation directly addresses the question.

Question 12

Most candidates made a valiant effort to adapt the quote from Epicurus to a philosopher or philosophers who were actually on the syllabus and it was pleasing to see how many were able to do so with considerable skill. Equally those who clearly struggled with the absence of a specific question on Montaigne were not harshly treated.

Are wisdom and ‘sober thinking’ the keys to the good life? Montaigne certainly valued reflection and wisdom (knowing yourself) but also was aware that pleasure and acceptance of who you are can be vital contributors to a good life.

Evaluation of relevant philosophers showed considerable skill at times. Most candidates explained that, at least superficially, the quote holds a great deal of wisdom.
Only a few candidates tried to evaluate what a ‘pleasant life’ was; is it the same as a good life? Nietzsche was used by a number to show that struggle can be crucial in moulding character and that ‘sober thinking’ may not be the best way to a pleasant life.

**Question 13**

The quote from Emily Dickinson was more appropriate to a third year English paper. Setting examiners should take account of how little real thinking time candidates have and how any quote must be accessible to the vast majority of candidates. Many candidates struggled with the connection and the default position was simply to evaluate Schopenhauer’s philosophy, most seeing him as a bit of an old hypocrite plagiarising from Eastern thought. Schopenhauer liked neither the journey nor the destination in one candidate’s words.

Better answers seized on the ‘hope’ mentioned in the poem, explaining that Schopenhauer would disagree with Emily Dickinson. Those answers also showed real familiarity with Schopenhauer’s views concentrating on his Wille zum Leben and then going on to explain and evaluate his compensations (Aesthetics, Ascetics and Ethics); those compensations proving fertile ground for the marker to award higher ratings for criteria 3 and 4.

Compared to the other philosophers in the unit, Schopenhauer does not attract a ‘tail’, those who cobble together an answer from a few dimly remembered lessons or DVDs.

**Question 14**

Apart from the irrelevant prefatory quotation, was well answered, and many candidates demonstrated a profound knowledge of Nietzsche with many relevant examples given.

**Question 15**

Was not answered well in general, although the question was not sufficiently linked to the Thoreau quotation given in the course outline, so only candidates who had studied Thoreau more broadly could properly answer it.
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