

Extended essay: Example commentary  
Subject: Philosophy  
WSEE theme (if applicable):  
Category for language essays (if applicable):  
Subjects used for WSEE (if applicable):  
Title of essay: Analysis of J.L. Mackie's refutation of Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defence  
Research question: To what extent has J.L. Mackie refuted Alvin Plantinga's Free Will Defence?  
Assessment details  
Criterion Mark awarded  
Commentary

A: Focus and method

[Maximum possible mark: 6]

6 The identification and explanation of the research topic is effectively communicated; the purpose and focus of the research is clear and appropriate. The research question is clear and addresses an issue of research that is appropriately connected to the discussion present in the essay. An appropriate range of relevant sources has been applied in relation to the topic and research question. There is a clear distinction in the use of the sources (works of the two authors) and secondary sources. There is evidence of an effective and informed selection of sources which are relevant to the research.

B: Knowledge and understanding

[Maximum possible mark: 6]

5 The research question is put into the context of philosophy of religion in general. The selection of source materials is clearly relevant and appropriate to the research question. The use of subject-specific terminology and concepts is accurate and consistent. The selection of sources (criterion A) is effective, but here (criterion B) its use might be more precise. The use of the works of the author is not as detailed as it should be (making more direct references to specific statements or parts of the texts which confirm the point) in relation to what the essay claims as evaluation. That affects methodology and is a reason why, being within the top markband, full marks are not allocated here.

C: Critical thinking

[Maximum possible mark: 12]

9 Research, analysis, discussion and evaluation are good. The research is analysed in a way that is clearly relevant to the research question; the inclusion of less relevant research rarely detracts from the quality of the overall analysis. An effective, reasoned argument is developed from the research, with a conclusion supported by the evidence presented. It is clearly structured and coherent and supported by a final or summative conclusion. The research has been evaluated, and this is partially critical showing a reasonable personal stance regarding the research question.

D: Presentation

[Maximum possible mark: 4]

4The presentation is good. The structure of the essay clearly is appropriate in terms of the expected conventions for philosophical argumentation. Layout considerations are present and applied correctly. The structure and layout clearly support the reading, understanding and evaluation of the essay.

E: Engagement

[Maximum possible mark: 6]

6Effective reflection highlights the journey the student has engaged with through the extended essay process. It shows evidence of critical and reflective thinking that goes beyond simply describing the procedures that have been followed. The reflections provide an insight into the student's thinking, creativity and originality. It shows the student's high degree of engagement and intellectual initiative, and demonstrates the learning that has taken place. Total marks awarded 30/34 This is a very good example of a well-circumscribed research question. A very good focus has been maintained throughout the essay. More specific references in Plantinga's presentation are needed as this would be a way to justify the evaluation of the research question. The bibliography is excellent but the lack of a deeper use of the sources affects the degree of justification of the argument.