Admissions assessment

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Cambridge

The total time for the Philosophy Admissions assessment is 1 hour.

The assesment has two parts. Part I, which lasts 20 minutes, contains eighteen multiple choice questions: you should mark your answers to these questions on the question paper itself. After 20 minutes, the question paper with your answers will be collected from you.

The question paper for Part II, which lasts 40 minutes, will then be given out. This part of the assesment contains two essay questions, of which you should choose only one. After 40 minutes, that second question paper, together with your essay, will be collected from you.

You will not be allowed to take either question paper from the examination room, nor any other notes or written material.

Below are some sample questions for each parts of the assesment. The sample questions are intended to illustrate the kind of questions you may be asked. You should not expect to be asked exactly these questions in the assesment itself.

Sample Questions – Part I

1. If all jazz musicians are talented, which of the following is ruled out?
   (a) Some classical musicians are also talented jazz musicians.
   (b) Some classical musicians who do not play jazz are talented.
   (c) Every classical musician is also a talented jazz musician.
   (d) Some classical musicians who are also jazz musicians are untalented.

2. Tigers in captivity frequently engage in obsessive patterns of behaviour, pacing back and forth on the same spot, swinging their heads from side to side, and other signs of stress. They do this even when their living areas are quite spacious. What this shows is that conditions of captivity are not a satisfactory substitute for the tiger's natural environment.

   Which of the following, if true, would most weaken the above argument?

   (a) Tigers are especially ill-suited to a life in captivity.

   (b) Many tigers in the wild engage in obsessive patterns of behaviour.

   (c) Tigers in captivity live much longer than those living in the wild.

   (d) Tigers in the wild cover many miles a day when they are hunting for food.

3. There are any number of theories to explain these events and, since even the experts disagree, it is ---- the rest of us in our role as responsible scholars to ---- dogmatic statements.

   Each of the following pairs of words can be inserted into the blanks, but which pair makes the best sense of the complete sentence?

   (a) paradoxical for ... refrain from

   (b) arrogant of ... compensate from

   (c) appropriate for ... abstain from

   (d) incumbent on ... issue forth

4. A relation is called ‘reflexive’ if everything bears that relation to itself. For example, the relation of *being identical to* is reflexive because everything is identical to itself. Which of the following is another reflexive relation?

   (a) is not the same weight as

   (b) is the mother of

   (c) is shorter than

   (d) is no shorter than

   (e) None of the above.

5. Albert says: `Everything Caroline says is true'.

   Betty says: `Everything I say is false'.

   Caroline says: `Everything David says is true'.

   David says: `Everything Caroline says is false'.

   Who is the only one who could be telling the truth?

   (a) Albert

   (b) Betty

   (c) Caroline

   (d) David

Sample Questions – Part II

Question 1

Older Brother has been caught breaking Little Brother's toys. Suppose we know that the most efficient way to make Older Brother stop breaking Little Brother's toys is to pay him £10. Are we justified if despite this knowledge we choose to punish Older Brother instead? Explain your answer.

Question 2

The night before Camper is to set off into the desert where a bottle of water will be his only available drink, Poisoner puts a fatal poison into Camper's bottle. Early the next morning, Spiller maliciously empties the bottle, in complete ignorance of what Poisoner had done the night before. Camper then sets off into the desert, in all innocence, and dies of thirst. Who caused Camper's death? Explain your answer.