PHILOSOPHY

What is truth? Do you have free will? What can we know for certain? What is the meaning of life? Does God exist? Can machines have consciousness? What is the difference between right and wrong actions? What is art? If these sorts of questions interest you, you're ready to study Philosophy.

The word 'philosopher' literally means lover of wisdom. It is not surprising then that the goal of Philosophy is to improve our understanding of the world and how we should live in it. Philosophers are concerned with answering questions about truth and value, about what's real and what's important.

WHY STUDY PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy isn't just the love of wisdom. Philosophy is also the love of thinking critically and creatively, of discussing intelligently and of arguing cogently. And these are skills that can be applied to almost any issue in almost any context. The study of Philosophy will therefore help you with all the other courses you take at university. Doing a Philosophy course can give you a competitive academic edge and enhance the overall quality of your degree.

If you're primarily interested in another subject area, such as Politics, History, Law, Mathematics, Computer Science, Psychology, Science, Literature or Religion, you can complement that area of study and uncover its basic presuppositions by taking Philosophy. In fact, it doesn't matter what subject you're interested in at the tertiary level, there's probably a link to Philosophy. You can put the thinking and reasoning skills you develop from Philosophy into action in any field.

If the study of metaphysics (what is real) or epistemology (what we can know for certain) gets your brain buzzing, you probably have an ability to engage in abstract reasoning and shuffle conceptual constructs around in your head. Words like 'epistemology' and 'metaphysics' may not resonate with employers but critical thinking, ethics, reasoning and problem-solving do. Philosophy graduates can make a good case for having the right intellectual stuff. Studying Philosophy can help identify cognitive styles that are natural to you which helps with career development.

If you enjoy logic, and tend to think in 'if… then…' sequences, you may find yourself attracted to work which allows you to carry tasks through to a conclusion such as in project management. Aptitude in logic may also mean ability in mathematics and/or computer science. These may be subjects

Career View explores how degrees and courses relate to employment opportunities and to life/work planning. It includes graduate destination information and current employment issues. Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

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to consider if planning a double major or double degree alongside Philosophy and could lead to employment in: operations research, mathematical modelling, cyber security, website design, software testing and development. Logic also has an affinity with linguistics and could lead into teaching English to speakers of other languages, cognitive science, or archive and information management.

Alternatively, you may find ethics and issues of morality fascinating. Ethical considerations are highly pertinent to business and professional practice, where decisions based on simple expediency are increasingly open to challenge. The ethical awareness developed from Philosophy studies may be applied to the practice of law, medicine, ICT, accountancy, science, engineering, business and government, and increasingly permeates all areas of an organisation's operation, and all levels of responsibility. Ethical considerations are particularly significant in the development of policies and strategic plans, particularly where public monies and communal resources are involved, and accountability is high. One area of demand is in technology, where the analytical skills and ability to question and think are sought, especially in high growth, competitive entrepreneurial environments.

WHAT SKILLS DO PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS DEVELOP?

Philosophy students develop a wide range of skills that would apply to any role. Underpinning all these skills is the ability to think logically and systematically as well as creatively to a high level.

Analytical skills: the ability to take an idea or a situation apart and understand the working relationships between each segment. Philosophy students are taught to look at issues from multiple points of view, and can construct and deconstruct arguments using logic and deductive reasoning. Because they are critical, they are alert to inconsistencies and spurious claims of inevitable outcomes. They can follow an argument through to a resolution - this skill is very important in roles where balanced judgement and the ability to hypothesise and predict are required, such as management positions, policy analysis, accountancy and the legal profession.

Problem-solving: the ability to recognise a problem exists, identifying its nature, attempting to solve it and coming up with preferable alternatives for the future. Philosophy students are experienced problem-solvers. They work intensively on issues that pit fact against fallacy; they weigh good reasoning

against bad, and are expected to offer solutions-based analyses. Since problems occur every day in every workplace, good problem-solvers are welcome wherever they go.

Decision-making skills: the ability to choose the best option from a range of alternative possibilities. Philosophy students are trained to examine the pros and cons of an idea and shape that thinking into a logical argument, tempered by ethical considerations. This kind of meta-analysis of process and consequence is valuable in work that demands quick decisions, such as law enforcement or cyber security, and roles involving co-operative decision-making such as in software, service design and development teams, counselling, psychology or social work.

Communication skills: the ability to capture the main points of an issue or situation and pass them on to others, accurately and in a form that is easy to understand, in either a written or verbal format. Philosophy students learn to synthesise information and present it to others as substantive and logical argument. Essential philosophical values are clarity and precision. Fluency and style are also encouraged. Communication skills are the big-ticket item on almost every employer's shopping list. All jobs require them.

Influencing skills: the ability to persuade others to accept the validity of a given position or point of view. Philosophy students become adept at putting together a reasoned argument and consequently good at sniffing out shaky ones. Knowing the difference is important, since most people consider themselves to be rational and therefore respond positively to

apparently rational propositions. The ability to influence is in demand throughout the highest levels of management and administration, in sales, marketing and advertising, and areas in which support networks are necessary, such as political and special interest organisations. Equally, students learn about collaboration as they analyse and assess one another's arguments and create a highly collegial environment in their discussion groups.

Research skills: the ability to know what to look for and how to find things out in a systematic and repeatable way. Philosophy students are taught to formulate hypotheses, identify issues, seek out relevant data, and use objective methods to assess the validity of ideas and propositions. Many jobs function in complex fast-evolving systems, where progress requires people who are curious and have ideas about what to do with their findings. Eagerness to dig into technical questions and examine them from all sides is also vital as technological change speeds up. Such people will be well placed to take on leadership roles, which demand both authority and vision.

WHERE DO PHILOSOPHY GRADUATES WORK?

Having developed a good range of higher order thinking skills, Philosophy graduates are well placed to consider career development in terms of a generic role (or roles) adapting their skills and experience into specific organisational contexts as appropriate. Philosophy graduates are found wherever there is a need for their skills, particularly in analysis, policy advice or research roles across the private and public sectors. Philosophy graduates can be involved in developing analytical and policy frameworks to solve problems, critically analysing proposals to ensure they will be effective in practice, drafting and presenting on policies as they are developed and put into action. Then they may coordinate and monitor programmes and make recommendations for the future.

Employers can include government departments and ministries such as Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections, Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and intelligence agencies, local authorities, technology and software development companies, policy and research consultancies and educational institutions.

If ethics are important to you, the reputation and purpose of the organisation you work for will probably also be important. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) with a social or humanitarian focus, such as the Cancer Society or Red Cross, may appeal and such organisations, in turn, may value your ethical consciousness coupled with other skills, such as administration, legal or technical.

Likewise, if aesthetics and philosophy of art are important to you, then working with government and non-government organisations focused on the arts may be attractive. Opportunities might include Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, NZ Film Commission, museums like Te Papa Tongarewa or smaller galleries, as well as publishing houses.

A postgraduate Philosophy degree, along with research experience, is normally preferred for policy analysis or research. However, research assistant, advisory, communications and media roles may be suitable for graduates with undergraduate qualifications. Useful skills and experience can be gained from part-time work and a number of employers offer summer internships in these areas. Having a second major or double/conjoint degree, with the other degree in law, science or commerce can also add complementary skills.

Philosophy graduate skills are particularly useful in management roles in a wide range of sectors and involve leading, coordinating and strategising for their organisations. These include areas such as planning, change management, project management or policy. Strategic management is the set of managerial decisions and actions that determines the longer term performance of an organisation, based on an analysis of the organisation's environment and resources at its disposal. In leadership roles graduates can have an influence in the organisation to achieve those goals. Leadership is not exclusively the domain of senior managers as it can be argued that almost every role has this dimension.

Management consultancies may be an interesting destination for Philosophy graduates with previous work experience, a conjoint/double degree or postgraduate degree in a complementary specialist subject. However, some management consultancies recruit high calibre graduates from any discipline, among which the study of Philosophy provides an excellent grounding. Management consultancies, such as Boston Consulting Group, L.E.K. or McKinsey & Company are multinational organisations that offer opportunities overseas for high calibre graduates. Some consultancies offer internships that are an excellent opportunity for students to put their learning into action.

Independent consultants with experience and postgraduate qualifications operate as independent business consultants and work on contract for universities, research organisations, government agencies or private companies.

Specialist roles in areas such as psychology, technology and software development, engineering, medicine, teaching and law generally require additional specific qualifications, however the intellectual capacity that the study of Philosophy develops, especially in logic, critical thinking and ethics, can enhance the performance in these roles considerably. A sound understanding of the social, cultural and religious values of different groups, personal integrity and the ability to debate assertively but understand others' viewpoints in conflict management is required.

An area of ongoing high demand is the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and apps by software and technology companies. With the exponential growth of the internet, cyber

GRADUATE PROFILES

security organisations are looking to other disciplines for people with strong analytical and diagnostic skills and the ability to work methodically.

Education. Philosophers mostly carry out teaching and research roles and they are increasingly part of inter-disciplinary study teams with business, science and technology faculties. Academic positions are highly competitive and require at least a PhD of good quality, together with developed research interests and a record of publication. Teaching, at the primary or secondary level, will require an additional qualification along with teaching subjects such as maths, sciences, languages, history or geography for secondary teaching. Many schools offer philosophy at primary and secondary level, so a Philosophy degree will set you apart as a teacher.

Work that involves the communication of information is also suited to the skills of Philosophy graduates, particularly journalism, content development, communications or public relations, although an additional relevant qualification is usually required for these jobs. Submitting freelance articles for publication, online content or broadcast, engagement in relevant social media or blogging can help build up professional credibility.

JOB TITLES

Following is a selection of titles taken from our graduate destination surveys. Some roles may require postgraduate or conjoint qualifications and training. Titles can include:

Administrator • business analyst • commentator • communications adviser • consultant researcher • court reporter • designer • entrepreneur • ethicist • futurist • intelligence analyst • journalist • lecturer • marketing adviser • organisational development adviser • philosopher • policy adviser • policy analyst • political researcher • primary teacher • private secretary • programmer • research analyst • researcher • sales manager • secondary teacher • security analyst • social media adviser • software tester • software developer • test leader • trainer • strategist • tutor • writer

Phillip Pithyou

Wellington District Ethnic Liaison Coordinator
New Zealand Police

Initially I decided to go to university to reflect my humanist approach of wanting to help others and understand how people think and behave. That is what led to my choosing Philosophy and Psychology as majors for my Bachelor of Arts.

What set Philosophy apart for me was the balance between art and science, logic and creativity. It was not just the retention but also the questioning of knowledge. The 'mind-blowing' factor of Philosophy was the way it opened up for me other dimensions of thinking. I learned to reason as well as draw inferences, and have my own world view expanded. I can manipulate, improve and edit information but also be introspective and reflect on where I am, where I fit in and what my own standpoint is. This sets the framework for critical thinking.
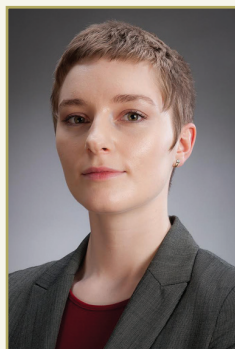
While I was a student and working at a youth service, a local Community Constable assisted us in an initiative to help youth obtain their driver licences. He was really personable and relatable, and asked me if I had ever considered a career in the Police. My awareness of a police career at that stage extended to what I had seen on TV. However, after reading up on it and then attending the 'scope' programme I was sold! It was not only the thrilling aspects and the physicality of it but the need to be caring, have good judgement and relate to diverse peoples. In policing, I am often in a position to influence people's lives in make-or-break situations and make decisions on the spot when there is urgency and tension. The ability to quickly and logically compute is critical, as is the ability to assess, analyse and very quickly come up with a strategy to de-escalate sometimes very difficult and complicated human situations.

The Philosophy degree has also honed my oral and written communication skills. These come in handy when doing anything from instilling trust and confidence in our vulnerable communities, preparing prosecution files or setting up programmes or initiatives that aim to reduce crime and victimisation. I work with people who have languages, cultures and mind-sets that differ from mine. Having developed an open, enquiring mind has helped make this role rewarding and challenging.

Isabella Nolan

Team Administrator
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
Trade (MFAT)

I studied a triple major for my Bachelor of Arts, in Philosophy, International Relations and Political Science. I chose these subjects as I have always been interested in 'whys', not just 'hows'.

Philosophy was a great compliment for my other areas of study, as there is a lot of crossover between the three subjects. Through exploring different areas of Philosophy I discovered the areas I am passionate about: applied ethics, and the relationship between citizens and the state, with a particular focus on civic obligations and civil-military relations. Philosophy extended my critical thinking, writing and arguing skills, which in turn helped me in my other subjects. In Philosophy essays and tutorials, students are encouraged to challenge the material: to come up with their own, original viewpoints, arguments and scenarios. Philosophy is a dynamic discipline – it teaches you the art of the argument, and the skills to clearly articulate what are often complicated rebuttals. You need to know your material well, be quick on your feet, and be prepared to stand up for what you believe while staying open to others' points of view.

These are all useful skills in my current role as Team Administrator with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I am currently focussing on gaining practical experience and Ministry specific knowledge. My passion for ethics and my pride in New Zealand are in line with the Ministry's values. MFAT expects excellence from its staff, and Philosophy prepares you well by insisting on quality in both preparation and presentation. I am currently working with the Ministry's Finance Division and the role is varied: everything from coordinating recruitment, arranging travel, preparing budget updates, and dealing daily with events as they occur. Many practical skills that I developed studying Philosophy I use daily at work: preparation and writing skills, anticipating problems and thinking on my feet. In my first Philosophy course, I was told that "a central philosophical virtue is clarity"; to achieve this, a Philosopher must develop an ability to work with complexity and clearly articulate their thoughts.

Of my three majors, Philosophy taught me the most, both in terms of knowledge and skills. I would encourage everyone to study Philosophy. Employers know that Philosophy students will be passionate, dynamic and articulate employees.

Blair Mumm

Judges' Personal Assistant
Ministry of Justice

I decided to study Philosophy partly because I enjoyed a high school English project in which I explored philosophical themes of a range of novels, and partly because Philosophy seemed very different, not only to subjects at high school, but also to other areas of study. Subjects that I felt indifferent to in high school were explored in much more fascinating ways in Philosophy classes, sometimes looking more at the big picture, other times far more specific issues. Language, science, statistics, history and other fields became fresh and intriguing through a philosophical lens.

I tend to think of Philosophy primarily as a set of skills, which can be applied to an extremely broad and diverse range of topics, including those that are commonly associated with Philosophy such as logic, metaphysics and epistemology (the theory of knowledge). These skills mainly comprise how to think critically and fairly; for instance, identifying how others view the world differently. Also how to evaluate hypothetical scenarios and their consequences. Then you must keep honing a piece of writing to convey a message or point to a high standard, and know when it helps to keep asking questions (and when it might help to stop).

Gaining these skills is what I value most from my Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Philosophy. I am fortunate to be able to use them every day in my current role at the Wellington District Court. I could be considering an important choice of words during the drafting of a judge's reserved decision, following a line of argument in a lawyer's submissions during a hearing, or determining how to appropriately conduct certain tasks while maintaining the important distinction between the public service and the judiciary.

You can get the most out of studying Philosophy by making an important trade-off; do your best not to hold any of your convictions too dearly, and you will be rewarded with the tools to understand not only how others reason about the world, but also how you reach and choose your own conclusions, whatever those conclusions may be.

Ushana Jayasuriya

Assistant Analyst
Education Review Office

Philosophy is one of those subjects people hear about but generally don't know much about at all. I thought I would give it a go and loved the way it challenged my way of thinking. In the school environment, we learned to memorise content but not to challenge it. Every major social or political issue and even the conception of what is real, can be explored in Philosophy. I quickly realised its importance in training the mind for making strong, valid and sound arguments. I found the subject covered a huge range of issues so you were never dealing with the same thing for long. It can also be a challenge because you can't cover everything but there is something for people wanting to work at the different levels of the discipline and for different learning approaches: practical (logic), ethics and meta-level thinking. Amongst Philosophy students and graduates there is also a great community of thinkers who can speak on a wide range of topics and are genuinely interested in learning more and spreading knowledge.

Critical thinking skills are the most valuable skills I have gained through my study. Being able to deconstruct and create arguments that look beyond the obvious (or not obvious at all) issues and find a basis for analysing them. Critical thinking and analytic skills are essential for my job as an analyst at the Education Review Office. In fact, in the interview I was asked why I chose to continue my study in Philosophy and not Law, and I explained that I wanted to examine the 'why' rather than the 'what' of issues and challenges in society and I was then told by the interviewers that an analyst job would fit me perfectly. This is because of the ability to argue from different viewpoints, present my thoughts and findings concisely for a range of audiences, other than the subject matter experts in the sector. Also key to this role is being able to understand the wider ethical framework that I am operating within. I have now completed my Master's all the while working part time in my role, another challenge I enjoyed.

I would highly recommend Philosophy as a course or major subject to engage with. If you are up for a mental challenge then it is the subject for you, as you will embrace the confrontation of the assumptions that guide our interactions and thoughts every day.

Dan Weijers

Philosophy Lecturer
University of Waikato

I would advise anyone who wants to gain critical thinking skills, and really challenge themselves intellectually, to take Philosophy courses.

After an Honours degree in Marketing, I found myself with an affinity for university, but no idea of what I wanted to do for a career. I then spent a year tutoring marketing and pursuing my emerging hobby of thinking deep thoughts about ethics, happiness, and the meaning of life. It took a trip to Europe, where many students don't graduate until their mid-twenties, to make me realise that it wasn't too late to start all over again. I decided on a career that would combine my hobby—philosophy—with my desire to teach at university. So, before I had ever taken a course, I knew that I wanted to be a Philosophy lecturer!

I loved my Philosophy classes and delighted in experiencing how smart-sounding arguments could be eviscerated by careful critical thinking. I marvelled at the simultaneous importance and difficulty of the big questions: "What ultimately makes our lives go well for us?" "What ought we do, morally speaking?" And, yes, even the stereotypical, "What is the meaning of life?" Thanks to the inspiring example of my Philosophy lecturers, especially my PhD supervisor, I slowly began to learn how think in slow motion, to critically analyse all kinds of arguments, and peek behind the many curtains pervading all aspects of life.

The Philosophy programme supported me through my studies academically, pastorally, professionally and financially. In addition to all of the expected benefits of PhD study and postdoctoral work, I was supported to attend a high level meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Happiness and Wellbeing: Defining a New Economic Paradigm and attend a job interview in California. Without all of this support, I would surely have failed to achieve my dream of teaching Philosophy in a New Zealand university. I am now lecturing in the Philosophy programme at the University of Waikato, and loving every minute of it, just like my Philosophy study at Victoria University of Wellington.