

What can I do with a degree in Philosophy?

Philosophy.



What is Philosophy?

Philosophy teaches you how to use your brain well: how to think carefully, clearly, logically, and rationally.

Philosophy is also fun. It gets you thinking deep and creatively about many of the world's most interesting, controversial, and perplexing questions. Does God exist? Do we have free will? Should we disobey unjust laws? Can machines think and feel? Could we survive death as computer uploads? What is consciousness? Are abortion and euthanasia ethical? Are moral rules culturally relative or universal? Should we trust science?

You will come out of a philosophy degree trained in how to reach well-informed decisions about what to believe and do; how to assess evidence; how to argue persuasively for a claim you believe in; and how to avoid common mistaken patterns of reasoning. These skills are highly valuable in any profession. Students who choose to major in other subjects often find that adding a mix of philosophy courses to their degree makes them more intellectually confident.

Learn more

It is important to do some research when planning a future career. Speak with, ask questions of, and follow relevant professional bodies, organisations, companies, thought leaders and industry professionals to learn more about:

- Career opportunities, work environments and salary information
- Education and training requirements.

Examples of professional bodies

- Association of Philosophers in Aotearoa New Zealand
<https://nzapblog.wordpress.com>
- New Zealand Society for Legal and Social Philosophy www.nzlsp.wordpress.com
- Australasian Association of Philosophy
www.aap.org.au
- New Zealand Association for Philosophy Teachers www.nzapt.net

Career and study information

Some study pathways and degrees have a recommended school background, and some careers may require further study beyond a first degree or additional experience.

Gather helpful information from:

- Subject-specific content at www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/subjects/philosophy
- Job profiles on career websites like www.careers.govt.nz
- Job adverts/vacancy descriptions
- Industry professional bodies.

This resource is part of a set of brochures focused on subject majors; many can also be studied as minors.



What skills can graduates gain?

Through studying a degree in Philosophy, graduates develop skills transferable to essentially any career. These skills can include:

- Clear, precise, and inventive thinking
- An understanding of ethics
- An understanding of logic (the science of inference)
- A capacity to assess and analyse information from diverse sources and reach a well-considered decision about what to believe or what to do
- The ability to solve problems and find common ground where there are competing perspectives
- The skill of constructing a sound and persuasively powerful argument for a claim, and of identifying errors in arguments
- Effective communication skills – oral and written.

Applied learning

Topics covered and debated in philosophy courses cover issues of direct, real-world relevance to graduates and their lives. Debating real world situations, problems and solutions in the classroom lead to learning how to reason carefully.

Also, undertaking an internship can further deepen graduates' skillset, awareness of others, working knowledge, and employability.

What do employers look for?

Many employers look for generic skills such as communication, client/customer-focus, bicultural competence, cultural awareness, teamwork and initiative.

With technology, globalisation, and other drivers changing society, skills such as resilience, problem solving, and adaptability are important.

Skills that are likely to grow in importance include analytical and creative thinking, systems thinking, technological literacy, AI and big data.*

*World Economic Forum: www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/05/future-of-jobs-2023-skills

How can these skills be developed?

- Some skills are gained through studying
- Extra-curricular activities can help, such as getting involved in clubs, mentoring, cultural groups, part-time work or volunteering
- Be open to professional and personal development opportunities, whether it is undertaking work experience, overseas exchange, skills seminar, or joining an industry group.

Where have graduates been employed?

Philosophy graduates are employed in a wide variety of sectors, including:

- Education and training
- Local councils and government agencies: e.g. Ministry of Education, the Government Communications Security Bureau, and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- Technology and telecommunications e.g. One, Microsoft
- Media, marketing, communications and publishing
- Healthcare
- Legal services
- Banking, finance and insurance
- Recruitment
- Manufacturing and retail
- Not-for-profit organisations e.g. Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand.

Some philosophy graduates have set up their own businesses.

What jobs and activities might graduates do?

Graduates with this degree are employed in a range of jobs — see some examples below.

Note: This list is not exhaustive, and some jobs may require further study, training or experience. It is recommended to start with the section 'How can I gain a sense of career direction?'

Policy analyst / advisor

- Identify issues and opportunities e.g. in society, law or governance
- Interpret and consult on existing policies
- Prepare reports and recommend changes

Tertiary lecturer

- Prepare and give lectures and tutorials
- Set and mark assignments and exams
- Conduct research, write and publish articles

Artificial intelligence (AI) researcher

- Specify and write AI code
- Design prototype robots
- Market AI systems to customers e.g. banks, hospitals, the military

Ethicist

- Train people in professional ethics
- Promote ethics and embed frameworks within an organisation e.g. police, hospitals

Marketing officer, sales manager

- Collect and analyse market insight
- Prepare and implement marketing plans
- Work with others to promote goods or services

Operations manager

- Help develop strategies and business plans
- Manage standards and business relationships
- Structure resources to deliver services or goods on time and to budget

Research analyst / advisor / assistant

- Organise and conduct research surveys
- Test theories and interpret the results
- Write reports and make recommendations

Human resources / recruitment advisor

- Understand a business's personnel needs
- Advertise vacancies and recruit staff
- Advise on workplace policies and procedures

Secondary school teacher

- Prepare and deliver learning experiences in specialised subjects
- Understand the learning needs of rangatahi, observe progress to personalise support
- Promote the wellbeing of rangatahi

Examples of other job titles and careers include:

- Comment moderator
- Librarian
- Future learning and development analyst
- Business analyst
- Local government officer
- Social researcher.

Further study options

Philosophy graduates can progress from honours through to PhD level. Many train in ethics, teaching, journalism, policy, librarianship, diplomacy or management.

Further study may facilitate career benefits such as specialist skills, entry into a specific occupation, higher starting salary, faster progression rate, and advanced research capability.

It is important to determine which, if any, further study options align with future career aspirations.

For further UC study options visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study

How can I gain a sense of career direction?

Understanding yourself and others is important to gain a sense of direction. This grows with experience; therefore, trying new things and reflecting on an ongoing basis is important.

Career planning checklist

Discover and reflect on:

- Your values, interests, strengths, abilities, and aspirations
- Your connection to whānau, people, and places
- Lifestyle preferences and location
- The skills you want to gain, use, or enhance

Engage in a variety of experiences to learn about:

- How you want to contribute to society, the environment, and global challenges
- The tasks, responsibilities and work environments you prefer
- Your work values, priorities and interests

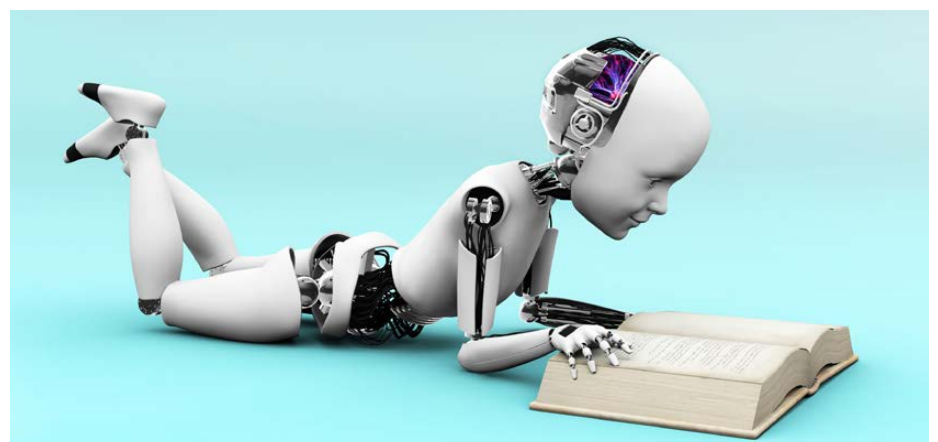
Learn more and gather career and study information

(refer to page one of this resource)

- Speak with people working in careers that interest you; check the realities of a job/career
- Gather information from various sources

Identify your next steps

- Talking to a career consultant can help you to identify your next steps. Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers



What have other students and graduates done?

Explore career stories of students' university experiences and UC alumni who make a difference globally in varied ways.

Visit: www.canterbury.ac.nz/about-uc/why-uc/our-students/student-stories



Rory

Mathematics Teacher, Buller High School

Master of Teaching and Learning in Secondary Education

Bachelor of Science in Philosophy and Psychology

Bachelor of Arts in English, minor Statistics

Previously, you mentioned that Philosophy was your favourite UC subject. How does it continue to shape your career?

Studying Philosophy has encouraged me to think more broadly about the role of education in society. It's led me to be cognisant of the moral dilemmas omnipresent in teaching (balancing the competing rights of different students to access learning within an insufficiently resourced public education system, tensions in the ethical theories underpinning behaviour management approaches, etc.). More practically, the clear and succinct mode of writing taught in Philosophy has been invaluable for preparing lesson materials, communicating through emails, and writing student reports.

What does your job involve as a Secondary School Teacher?

A bit of everything, really. Sourcing and adapting lesson resources (or creating them from scratch), examining qualitative and quantitative assessment data, participating in meetings and professional development sessions, liaising with colleagues and whānau to support student achievement, plus so much more... and that's just outside the classroom. Delivering engaging lessons and managing the class environment during that time is the core responsibility of my job.

What advice would you give to someone considering Philosophy?

Do it, even if you just dip your toes in with a 100-level paper somewhere. Philosophy teaches you to view the world around you critically and analytically, to develop a well-informed position and defend it convincingly, and to write concisely and unambiguously. These skills are valuable in a wide array of academic and vocational settings.

I studied an eclectic range of disciplinary areas during my time at UC. If I visualise all the disparate courses from different subjects forming a sort of mosaic, Philosophy would be the mortar that holds it all together. It imbricates with, and thereby enriches, other fields of study.

Career guidance

Career services are available for future and current students, and recent graduates. To learn more, contact:

Te Rōpū Rapuara | Careers

T: +64 3 369 0303

E: careers@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/life/jobs-and-careers

Helpful career insights

- Speaking with employers is key to finding opportunities; not all jobs are advertised
- Developing an online presence is useful as employers can search for future employees online
- Learning about recruitment patterns and where to find opportunities is important.

Study advice

Student Advisors at UC help with questions focused on starting, planning and changing studies. To connect with Student Advisors, visit:

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/study-support-info/study-support

Future students – contact:

The Future Students team

T: 0800 VARSITY (0800 827 748)

E: futurestudents@canterbury.ac.nz

First year students – contact:

Kaitoko | First Year Student Advisors

T: +64 3 369 0409

E: firstyearadvice@canterbury.ac.nz

Continuing students – contact:

Toi Tangata | Arts

T: +64 3 369 3377

E: artsdegreeadvice@canterbury.ac.nz

www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/academic-study/arts

