

## A-LEVEL / AQA / 2 YEARS

# PHILOSOPHY

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Philosophy is an invitation to think and argue about some of the most profound areas of human experience, often in areas where science can't give us satisfactory answers. We read, think, argue and debate the basis of morality, the nature of religion, the many ways of knowing something and whether they are all of equal value. Whether we are born a blank slate or with certain ideas already present within us. All opinions are interesting and all are treated with deep scepticism.

There are four areas of study and in each we engage with the great thinkers of the past and present.

**EPISTEMOLOGY** What do we know and how do we know it? This pursues questions raised by the infamous white and gold dress; how much confidence can we have in our senses? **ETHICS** How can we establish right and wrong? Should we look at a person's motivations for doing  $x$ ? Should we look at the consequences of  $x$ ? Is  $x$  right or wrong regardless of why we do it or what consequences it has? Is goodness even a real thing? **MIND** Why are human minds the only thing we know of in the universe to have consciousness? Why has modern science made so much progress studying how a brain works and yet made no advance on what consciousness is? Why is a brain aware of itself? **RELIGION** Can we prove God's existence? Can we make the idea of a good god fit with the reality of a world of suffering?

### TEACHING & LEARNING METHODS

We assume no prior knowledge, but value the following traits: you must be open to new ideas; you must be able to deal with difficult and odd concepts; you need to be capable of novel, logical thinking; you will be assisted to engage with complex ideas, taxing texts and logical thought processes and you must therefore be capable of independent thought. We value discussion, curiosity and an ability to construct very precise arguments.

### ASSESSMENT

The course is examined by two three-hour written examinations at the end of the course. These consist of a wide range of questions and question styles (from essays through short answer questions) to suit all learners.

### SUBJECT COMBINATIONS

Philosophy sits extremely well with all other subjects; students may wish to complement their science with metaphysics (the questions science can't answer) or complement the elements of Plato in Classics with some more in-depth study here; the logic of Maths and Computing are mirrored in the construction of logical accounts; RS students will find some overlap, but may welcome this. There is no subject or student that cannot benefit from rigorous thinking and engagement. Most subjects for instance have an ethical side and many careers (for example medicine) depend upon such thinking.

### CAREERS/HE INFORMATION

Our Philosophy students are studying subjects from Philosophy to engineering at many different universities. Our students have been accepted to read Philosophy at Cambridge and Durham amongst many others. Past students are lecturing in Psychology, running entertainment businesses and pursuing careers at Law. Universities value the breadth of skills and knowledge students develop; the ability to unpick an argument and find the weaknesses within it and the confidence to tackle intellectually challenging ideas.