



## How will I be assessed?

By examination only: the Cambridge Pre-U qualification consists of three examinations, one of two hours and 15 minutes duration and two of two hours duration, all at a level equivalent to A-level and taken at the end of two years.

## What skills will I develop during this course?

High-ranking universities describe Philosophy as having an 'emphasis on the development of analytical and critical skills' (Cambridge) and as developing 'analytical rigour' and 'logical reasoning' (Oxford). Philosophy also develops your abilities to 'think outside of the box', problem-solve and communicate ideas clearly and persuasively.

### Philosophy is for you if –

- You like to think about issues, even if they seem difficult at first
- You enjoy discussing your ideas with others, and are prepared to listen to other people's ideas
- You are willing to challenge conventional views and taken-for-granted assumptions

### You won't enjoy Philosophy if –

- You don't like to read about how ideas have developed and changed
- You don't like it when there isn't a straightforward answer to some questions
- You want a quick and easy way of getting a qualification!

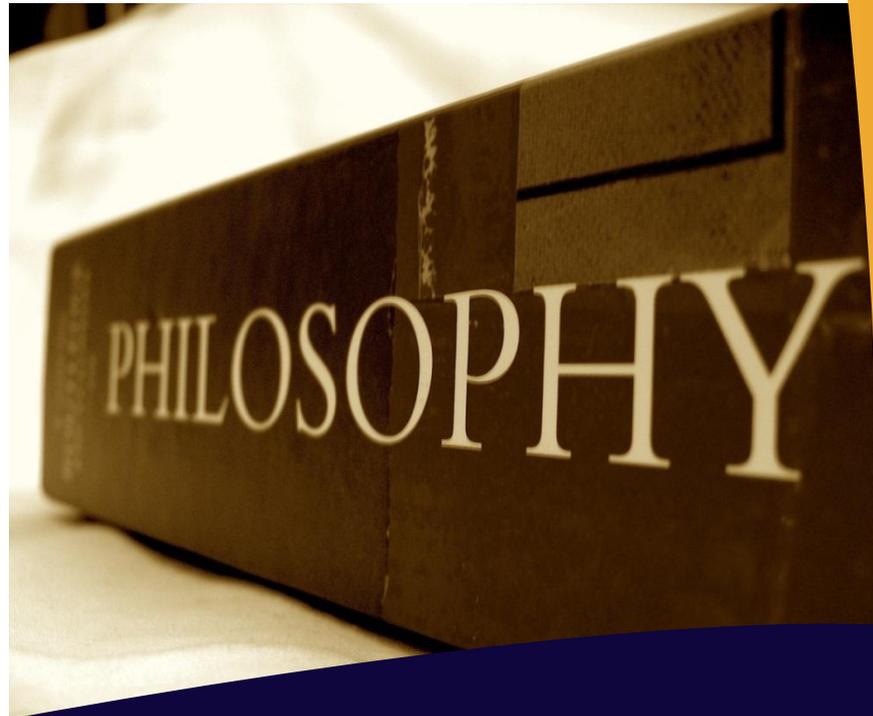
**If you would like to know more about philosophy, here are some books which you may find in your library:**

Stephen Law, *The Philosophy Files*, (Orion Books). This is an easy to read book for children (and grown-ups who like silly cartoons!) discussing some well-known philosophical questions.

Bryan Magee, *The Story of Philosophy*, (Dorling Kindersley): a beautifully illustrated, accessible history of philosophy.

Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy – The Basics*, (Routledge).

Philosophy in a nutshell - read about all of it in 150 pages!



## PHILOSOPHY

### Cambridge Pre-U

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## What is the course about?

Philosophy asks questions about fundamental aspects of human existence. There are many branches of philosophy; for almost every area of thought there is a 'philosophy' that reflects on the underlying issues relevant to it.

### The Cambridge Pre-U in Philosophy is a two-year course

Paper 1 of the Cambridge Pre-U involves the study of a number of **foundational debates in philosophy**. These are: Plato and Aristotle; Empiricism and Rationalism; Moral Absolutism and Moral Relativism; Conscience, Free Will and Determinism.

Papers 2 and 3 include options for study. At present the preferred options are:

**Epistemology.** What is knowledge? What, if anything, can be said to be known for certain? How can it be known? The role of philosophical doubt: Descartes' search for knowledge that cannot be doubted. The relationship between knowledge, belief and justification. Theories of how we might justify the beliefs that we hold, including foundationalism, reliabilism and coherentism. The relationship between our sense experience and reality: theories of perception, including naïve realism, representative realism, idealism and phenomenalism

**Philosophy of Mind.** This philosophical theme concerns the nature of consciousness. Is the mind physical – e.g. is the mind the brain – or do mental states possess properties that brain states do not? Is it possible that you are the only minded being and that everyone else is a zombie with no real feelings or attitudes? If mental states are physical do they have to be brain states or could some artificially intelligent systems possess them? What, if anything, makes you the same person now as you were 10 years ago or will be in 10 years' time? Do you want to be identical to the person you were 10 years ago?

## What is the department like?

We are a growing department, housed in a new teaching block. The tutors are enthusiastic about their subject and are keen to introduce newcomers to their field. We realise that it is a new and difficult subject for most students, and we like to use a variety of ways to introduce and illustrate philosophical issues. There are around 150 students in Philosophy across the two year groups, and most of our students achieve high grades.

Teaching uses a variety of approaches designed to suit different abilities and learning styles. We try hard to help any student with his or her own learning difficulties such as dyslexia and to stretch those with high academic ability.

## What sort of work will I be doing?

When studying philosophy, we don't invent our own theories from scratch. We learn what great philosophers have said about these issues in the past and discuss their importance for our present thinking. So there is a variety of work. Studying texts and theories involves reading, reflection and discussion; you may be set short tests, but also substantial essays requiring some research.

## What are the entry requirements?

The minimum requirements are five GCSE subjects at grade 4 or above, with a 6 in English Language. However, philosophy is a demanding subject; the real qualification that will help you to succeed is the ability to think

## WHAT ARE THE PROGRESSION ROUTES FOR THIS QUALIFICATION?

Philosophy combines well with most subjects, whether they are natural or social sciences or humanities subjects, and will provide evidence of important competencies for UCAS and employment applications. Because you acquire important thinking skills as well as subject knowledge, Pre U in philosophy is an excellent preparation for any degree course. Philosophy is taught at many British universities and can be combined with a wide variety of other subjects. Graduates enter a wide variety of careers particularly those requiring analytical, evaluative and problem solving skills.