



GO BEYOND BOUNDARIES

# Philosophy

UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE



**GRADUATES IN EMPLOYMENT  
and/or further study  
15 months after graduation\***  
Graduate Outcomes Survey 2025

\* Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies Graduates

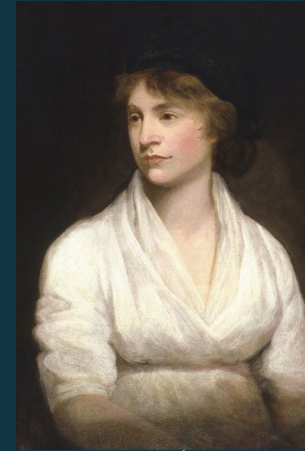
## Why is Philosophy at Aberdeen the best choice for me?

Philosophy at Aberdeen is a vibrant, diverse and inclusive department that carries forward a tradition of over 500 years. We offer a comprehensive programme with a mix of contemporary and historical topics. We place a strong emphasis on research-led teaching. Aberdeen is 7th in the UK for Philosophy by the Guardian University Guide 2024.

Through co- and extra-curricular opportunities, you can enhance your intellectual, social and employability skills, and feel part of a welcoming community that is passionate about Philosophy.

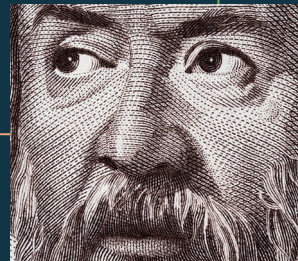


**INVESTIGATE  
AND ADDRESS  
REAL-LIFE SOCIAL  
ISSUES WHILST  
SHARPENING  
YOUR SKILLS.**



Aberdeen is structured a little differently from other universities and these differences make Aberdeen special. To help you get started let us explain the basics.

At Aberdeen we offer as much variety as we can, so you always get a chance to sample something new. In your first year you experience a range of subjects in and beyond Philosophy, without the need to commit long-term. You can experiment with different subjects. Usually in the second year you start to focus on your main degree interests. By the end of the second year, you'll know which subjects you want to continue with at honours level. Having discovered where your strengths and interests lie, you can tailor your degree accordingly, taking advantage of the wide range of courses offered in the discipline.



# The Big Questions

As a philosophy student, you will engage with important and fascinating questions in a variety of branches of philosophy through critical thinking and the study of arguments.

## Year 1

Core:

### Experience, Knowledge and Reality (15 cr)

- Two 1500 word essays

And at least two from:

### Controversial Questions (15 cr)

- 1500 word essay and take-home exam

### Logic and Argument (15 cr)

- Problem sets and two take-home exams

### How Should One Live? (15 cr)

- 1500 word essay and take-home exam

- + Plus further courses to reach 120 credits

This will develop your skills of analysis and communication, your ability to question assumptions and to think critically and creatively.

## Year 2

At least 3 from:

### Metaphysics and Epistemology (15 cr)

### Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (15 cr)

### Philosophy and Society (15 cr)

### Political Philosophy (15 cr)

- + Plus further courses to reach 120 credits

## Sharing our Treasures

Great universities have great libraries. At Aberdeen our internationally important special collections and archives date from the third century BC to the present day. As well as 230,000 rare printed books, and more than 4,000 items from the sixteenth century, we have irreplaceable archival collections.

## Years 3 and 4

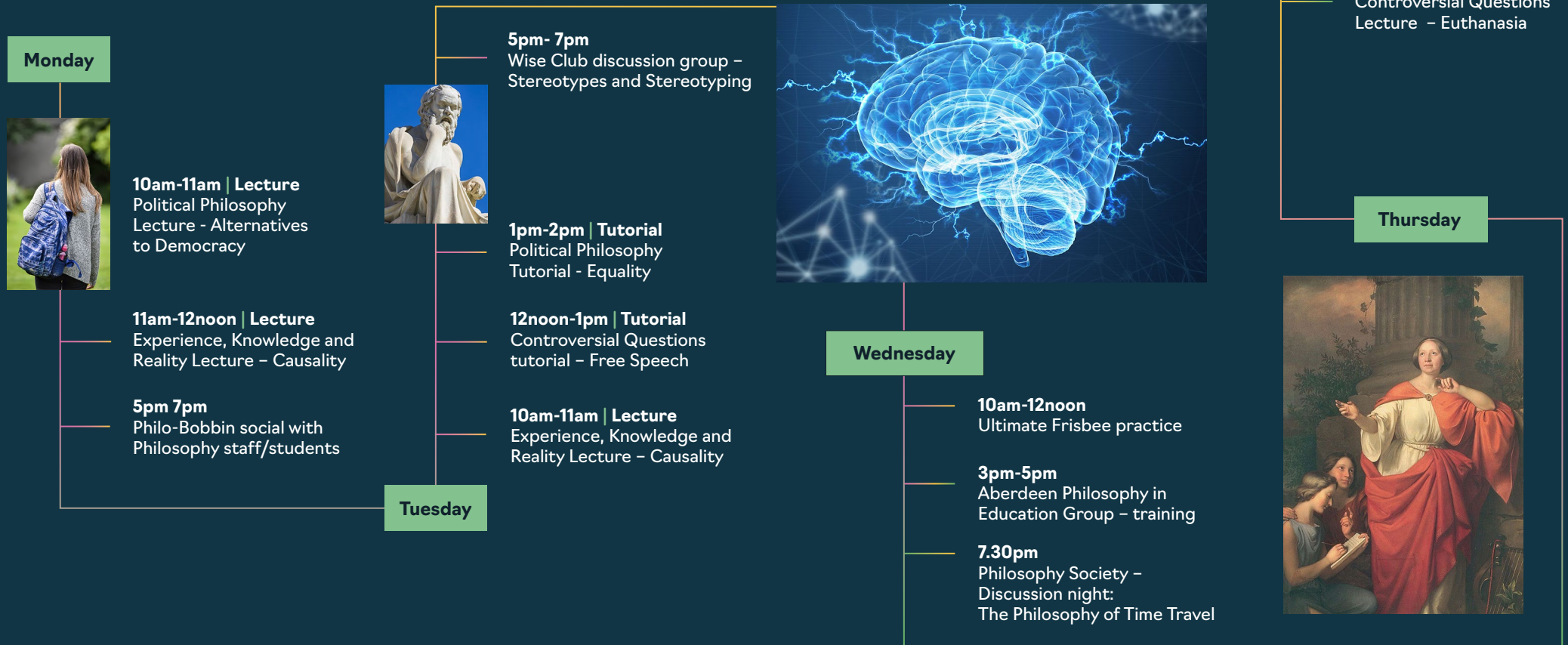
Choose courses from:

- Ancient Chinese Philosophy (30 cr)
  - Contemporary Topics in Philosophy (30 cr)
  - Creativity (30 cr)
  - Effective Altruism (30 cr)
  - Free Will and Moral Responsibility (30 cr)
  - Genes, Brains and Evolution (30 cr)
  - Global Justice (30 cr)
  - Justice for Animals (30 cr)
  - Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (30 cr)
  - Knowledge Power and Society (30 cr)
  - Philosophy of Games and Sports (30 cr)
  - Philosophy of Medicine (30 cr)
  - Philosophy of Time (30 cr)
  - Social Epistemology (30 cr)
  - Social Ontology (30 cr)
  - The Metaphysics of Possibility (30 cr)
  - The Open Future (30 cr)
  - The Philosophy of Virtual Worlds (30 cr)
- Year 4 students also complete a 10,000 word Dissertation supervised by a member of staff.



# A week in the life of a Philosophy student

Here's an example of how the week's commitments pan out for a current first year undergraduate student who has chosen to study Philosophy.



# What skills will a Philosophy degree from Aberdeen give me?

- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Flexibility
- Analysis
- Relationship-building



Philosophy students will gain extensive intellectual skills in critical analysis and communication and the ability to apply these to specific problems.

In a world where analysis and communication are ever more important, Aberdeen Philosophy graduates develop core skills essential to most careers - the ability to work independently and in teams, to think critically and creatively, and to present arguments clearly.

**University shouldn't just prepare you for your first job, but for the rest of your life.**

**Nicky Campbell OBE**  
TV and radio presenter  
& Aberdeen alumnus

# Graduating class



**Beth Doran**

The Philosophy courses at Aberdeen are interesting and accessible to all, regardless of prior experience in the subject. From first year, the courses teach you the skills you need to read and write philosophy papers, and provide engaging material to ponder. I have also found that the department are helpful and welcoming to new people, and they run a number of events which allow you to get to know other students and staff. In terms of employment skills, philosophy has taught me how to think critically and argue considerately, which I believe are necessary skills to have in many workplaces. The course has taught me how to write clearly and concisely in order to get my point across in the strongest possible way, something I value when trying to communicate complex arguments.



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## What sort of career could I enter?

Focus groups and surveys show that employers highly value what humanities students learn at University. More than nine out of ten say a job candidate's capacity for thinking and communicating clearly and solving complex problems is more important than their degree subject, according to an AAC&U poll. More than three-quarters favor applicants who understand other cultures.


Our recent graduates have had no difficulty in securing rewarding jobs in a wide variety of sectors, including NGO campaigns officer, senior policy officer, curator at the National Library of Scotland, senior HR manager, and many others.




**Prof Beth Lord**   
Head of the School of Divinity,  
History, Philosophy & Art History

Philosophy gives you so much more than key concepts and skills. It is not so much a body of knowledge as a way to understand what knowledge can be. Philosophy teaches you how to think: the most important skill for a life well lived.


## Was your degree at Aberdeen essential for getting to where you are now?

 I never thought I would have to deal with so many legal documents, yet, having to read and analyse primary sources really isn't any different from analysing a contract. Also, having to form an opinion and back it up in essays has formed a good basis in being a good negotiator. It is not just about what is on the piece of paper after four years, but all the skills you have gained along the way.

**Buyer for a major  
supermarket chain**

 Yes. It gave me confidence in myself and in my ability with words. It taught me not to always accept the accepted version of events, to try to see the 'big picture', to empathise with the people involved. It was essential in being able to distinguish the critical items from the merely important and to present them in a concise, legible manner.

**CEO, European  
manufacturing company**

 I quickly found that the training I'd had at Aberdeen... was an excellent preparation: skills in researching a subject, analysing it, and explaining conclusions orally and in writing.

**Civil servant in the Scottish Office**

# 10 reasons to choose Aberdeen

## 01 The academic strength you would expect from a 500 year old university – yet right at the forefront for careers in the 21st century

A thriving, cosmopolitan community with students from 130 countries set within a beautiful, historic campus that has seen five Nobel Prizes.

## 02 Choice and flexibility

At Aberdeen, Philosophy can be studied with many other subjects across the Arts and Sciences. First and Second year Philosophy students can take courses from right across the MA (Arts and Humanities) degree, and even take courses in science subjects. Year Three and Four students can focus solely on Philosophy, or take joint degrees – included PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics).

## 03 Degrees which are recognised and respected worldwide

All staff teaching in Philosophy are internationally recognised experts in their research areas, and regularly teach on these subjects at all levels of the degree.

## 04 A proven track record for employment, with the best headstart your career can get

Our experience and connections can help secure that all-important first step on the ladder to a successful career. We offer student workplace internships and the opportunity to attend our annual Employability Networking Event.

## 05 Opportunities to develop yourself and your interests

Not only academic qualifications to rival the best, but also personal, communication and teamwork skills to make you an all-round achiever in whatever you choose to do. We boast over 220 clubs and societies for students to join, including a dedicated Philosophy Society and offer excellent on-campus sports facilities.

## 06 The very best learning resources

Students are provided with bespoke support across all years of study, and a wide variety of online resources are available to support student learning using our Virtual Learning Environment "MyAberdeen".



## 07 A supportive community

A self-contained friendly campus in a friendly city; we will do everything we can to help you feel at home quickly. We have excellent support services to ensure you have access to all the support and guidance you might need - academic, personal, medical or financial.

## 08 First class accommodation

All new students are guaranteed a place in student accommodation, either on the campus or close by - so no need to set the alarm too early!

## 09 A buzzing, friendly city that has it all

Aberdeen is everything a student city should be and more! Historic, international, fashionable and friendly.

## 10 We're connected!

Daily scheduled flights from Aberdeen International Airport mean we are just 90-minutes from London, Dublin, and Amsterdam. There are also trains and buses departing every hour from Aberdeen city centre to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, and the rest of Scotland.


**Any questions? Phone us on 01224 272090 or email [study@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:study@abdn.ac.uk)**



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