Philosophy

2021 Subject Outline | Stage 1 and Stage 2

Published by the SACE Board of South Australia,  
60 Greenhill Road, Wayville, South Australia 5034

Copyright © SACE Board of South Australia 2010

First published 2010

Reissued for 2011 (published online October 2010,  
printed January 2011), 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016,   
2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

ISBN 978 1 74102 553 8 (online Microsoft Word version)

ref: A936791

*This subject outline is accredited for teaching at Stage 1 from 2010 and at Stage 2 from 2011*

contents

Introduction 1

Subject Description 1

Capabilities 1

Literacy in Philosophy 3

Numeracy in Philosophy 4

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge, Cultures, and Perspectives 4

Stage 1 Philosophy 5

Learning Scope and Requirements 6

Learning Requirements 6

Content 6

Assessment Scope and Requirements 9

Evidence of Learning 9

Assessment Design Criteria 9

School Assessment 10

Performance Standards 12

Assessment Integrity 14

Support Materials 15

Subject-specific Advice 15

Advice on Ethical Study and Research 15

Stage 2 Philosophy 17

Learning Scope and Requirements 18

Learning Requirements 18

Content 18

Assessment Scope and Requirements 26

Evidence of Learning 26

Assessment Design Criteria 26

School Assessment 27

External Assessment 28

Performance Standards 29

Assessment Integrity 32

Support Materials 33

Subject-specific Advice 33

Advice on Ethical Study and Research 33

Introduction

Subject Description

Philosophy is a 10-credit subject or a 20-credit subject at Stage 1, and a 20-credit subject at Stage 2.

Students learn that philosophy is part of life: it shapes the way people think, what they consider to be of value, what they take as being the truth, and how they engage with others and the world around them. Historically and now, philosophers have been recognised as teachers of wisdom whose contributions have helped to form society and its visions for the future.

Philosophy involves the rational investigation of questions about existence, knowledge, and ethics, to which there are no simple answers. Consequently, philosophical problems tend to provoke disagreement and foster a variety of views and theories about the nature of the world and what ought to be done. Investigation of these problems requires skills of critical reasoning, developed through an understanding of reasoning and the foundations of argument analysis.

Philosophy promotes respect for intellectual integrity as a human value and develops students’ skills to engage in philosophical argument. Students build their capacity to be creative and independent critical thinkers who can articulate and justify philosophical positions and argue reasoned action.

Capabilities

The capabilities connect student learning within and across subjects in a range of contexts. They include essential knowledge and skills that enable people to act in effective and successful ways.

The five capabilities that have been identified are:

* communication
* citizenship
* personal development
* work
* learning.

The capabilities for citizenship, communication, personal development, and learning are reflected in the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards. Students develop these capabilities through their critical thinking skills and knowledge of philosophy (which can be applied throughout their lives as global citizens) to analyse philosophical and other arguments or positions; formulate and communicate good arguments; and assist with solving complex problems in ethical ways, whether for themselves or with, and for, others.

Communication

In Philosophy, students develop an understanding of, and skills to use, language and concepts of philosophy to identify philosophical aspects of issues, analyse philosophical arguments, and explain the flow of logic leading to their conclusions. Students develop skills in disciplined collaborative dialogue through the ‘community of inquiry’ pedagogy. Students structure texts appropriately for particular purposes, using the conventions of philosophical argument.

Students communicate their learning through a range of assessments, in written, oral, and/or multimodal forms, which may include extended prose, debate, dialogue, or other forms. Students may communicate within and across cultures to understand what different cultures consider right and wrong, and alternative ways of thinking and knowing.

Students may use qualitative or quantitative evidence when communicating support for, or contesting positions on, issues. They may use information and communication technologies to acquire evidence and/or communicate their reasoned arguments. Students express and sometimes challenge their own ideas and opinions.

Citizenship

In Philosophy, students have opportunities to develop skills to identify rational and ethical argument for civic, social, political, economic, environmental, and legal participation. Contemporary issues considered by students may include Indigenous and other social justice issues, and they may involve social relativism, racism, and/or environmental sustainability.

Personal Development

In Philosophy, students’ personal identity can be further developed through their growing understanding of ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology. In analysing their own ideas and opinions and those of others, students reflect on the purpose, direction, and decision-making about their present and future. The knowledge and skills that students gain in reasoning and argument can be applied to aspects of their current and future lives.

Work

In Philosophy, students develop and apply skills such as problem-solving and creative thinking, as well as knowledge relevant to a range of local and global vocational pathways, situations, and livelihoods, including, for example, law, government, entertainment, education, corporate business, and tourism. Students may investigate the notions of rights and responsibilities, and the distinction between political and human rights, and develop their skills to discuss, analyse, and resolve conflicts. Their developing skills of reasoning and argument help prepare them to understand their rights and the rights of others (e.g. in future work and community life).

Learning

In Philosophy, students participate in a ‘community of inquiry’ to identify skills of reasoning and critical analysis of arguments, using the terminology and concepts of philosophy. Students use reasoning and evidence to differentiate good and bad arguments. Students identify and analyse philosophical positions on issues, using a range of perspectives, and suggest what ought to be done. Competing concepts of social justice may be analysed for their underlying philosophical views. Students discuss the concept of the common good and the processes this involves.

Students develop understanding of what makes an argument valid and/or sound and differentiate inductive and deductive arguments. Students develop understanding of the role of circumstances in shaping moral codes in societies and cultures; the extent to which people can point to universally defensible underlying moral principles; and the logical and moral basis on which any such principles can be justified. Philosophy is at the heart of learning.

Literacy in Philosophy

Students should have opportunities to develop their literacy skills in Philosophy, using the terminology and concepts of the subject in meaningful contexts. Such contexts should include locating and organising information, listening, questioning, viewing, reading, discussing, debating, writing, and role playing. Text refers to print, electronic, oral, and visual texts.

Students identify a philosophical issue and use reasoning and critical analysis to test assumptions relating to different positions and arguments about the issue. They may consider elements of context, purpose, bias, intent, inference, accuracy, relevance, reliability, and authority of views, as well as views excluded.

Students develop their skills in identifying philosophical views, questioning the soundness of arguments with emphasis on reasons, and making their own arguments supported with theory and evidence. The emphasis of argument in philosophy is on depth rather than on breadth. Students identify weak and strong arguments, using inductive and deductive reasoning. They make conclusions based on the flow of logic and evaluation of the relative weight of arguments (points and counterpoints).

As part of understanding the literacy of philosophy and the nature of argument, students develop skills in evaluating arguments as a whole and make conclusions about the strength of the argument. Conventions of a philosophical argument include premises justified by inductive or deductive reasoning, leading to a conclusion that flows logically from the premises.

Numeracy in Philosophy

In Philosophy, students have opportunities to develop numeracy skills. These skills enable students to:

* interpolate, extrapolate, and interpret statistical information
* interpolate: estimate (values) in between known ones in the same range
* extrapolate: estimate (values) beyond the range of data
* interpret: decide intended meaning
* understand the language of mathematics (including how a term in mathematics may have a different meaning in other contexts)
* understand and use graphic illustrations
* consider statistical reliability of surveys
* consider when it is safe to generalise in relation to data
* consider parallels between logic in philosophy and logic in mathematics.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge, Cultures, and Perspectives

In partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and schools and school sectors, the SACE Board of South Australia supports the development of high-quality learning and assessment design that respects the diverse knowledge, cultures, and perspectives of Indigenous Australians.

The SACE Board encourages teachers to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives in the design, delivery, and assessment of teaching and learning programs by:

* providing opportunities in SACE subjects for students to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and contemporary experiences
* recognising and respecting the significant contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Australian society
* drawing students’ attention to the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives from the past and the present
* promoting the use of culturally appropriate protocols when engaging with and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Stage 1 Philosophy

Learning Scope and Requirements

Learning Requirements

The learning requirements summarise the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students are expected to develop and demonstrate through their learning in Stage 1 Philosophy.

In this subject, students are expected to:

1. identify philosophical issues and positions

2. understand the general structure of a philosophical argument

3. provide reasons to support philosophical issues and positions

4. differentiate good and bad arguments, using philosophical terminology

5. critically analyse assumptions, positions, and arguments

6. communicate philosophical issues and positions, with conventions observed.

Content

Philosophy is a 10-credit subject or a 20-credit subject at Stage 1.

In each 10-credit and 20-credit subject, students:

* explore philosophical issues
* develop philosophical inquiry skills
* participate in a community of inquiry.

In each 10-credit subject, students also:

* write at least one guided ethical issues study, in the issues analysis
* undertake at least one student-negotiated issues study in any key area.

In each 20-credit subject, students also:

* write at least two guided ethical issues studies, in the issues analysis
* undertake at least two student-negotiated issues studies in epistemology and/or metaphysics.

See the three key areas outlined in the ‘Philosophical Issues’ section.

Philosophical Issues, Philosophical Inquiry Skills, and Community of Inquiry

Students are encouraged to explore philosophical issues individually as well as within a community of inquiry.

Philosophical Issues

The philosophical issues that form the content of a teaching and learning program should be drawn from one or more of the three key areas described below:

* ethics — a study of moral values, reasoning about what is right and wrong
* epistemology — a study of theories of knowledge and knowing
* metaphysics — a study of the nature of existence and reality (what there is in the world).

Central to this subject is the development of sound skills of critical reasoning that enable students to take a position on issues in the three key areas. These skills form a foundation for philosophical investigation throughout Stage 1 Philosophy.

Key Area 1: Ethics

Ethics is a philosophical study of moral values and reasoning about right and wrong. Ethical theories provide frameworks for understanding moral disputes.

The following issues are suggested for this key area:

* How should we relate to other people?
* What kinds of actions are right and wrong?
* How do we choose between conflicting human rights?
* Why should we value the natural environment?

Key Area 2: Epistemology

Epistemology is a philosophical study of theories about knowledge and what it means to know something. It is concerned primarily with the methods of acquiring and validating knowledge.

The following issues are suggested in this key area:

* What can we know?
* How can we justify what we know?
* What are our systems of knowledge?
* What knowledge can we have of the future?

Key Area 3: Metaphysics

Metaphysics is a philosophical study of existence and reality.

The following issues are suggested in this key area:

* What does it mean for something to exist?
* What is truth?
* What is a person?
* Are we free?
* What is the relationship between the mind and the body?

Philosophical Inquiry Skills

Philosophical inquiry skills are the cognitive skills of reasoning, critical analysis, problem‑solving, and evaluation of arguments.

Students are introduced to the general principles of reasoning:

* types of reasoning
* the general structure of arguments
* the difference between good and bad arguments.

These skills continue to be developed, together with students’ problem-solving skills, in analysing identified philosophical problems.

Community of Inquiry

A community of inquiry is a collaborative model based on dialogue, whereby students reflect deeply on philosophical problems by understanding how philosophers have thought about those problems.

The community of inquiry approach requires students to sit in a circle (preferably) with a facilitator (the teacher). The facilitator’s role is to help the students to uncover the philosophical element in the issues that they discuss. In this way, the teacher is an enabler and not a ‘font of knowledge’. The facilitator asks questions to enable the students to inquire more deeply and challenge their assumptions.

The community of inquiry approach is grounded in disciplined, collaborative dialogue: dialogue, because thinking shows itself most directly in speech; disciplined, because rational thinking shows itself not in mere talking, but in talking that is disciplined by the rules of logic; and collaborative, because philosophical inquiry is more fruitful when carried out in collaboration with peers.

In a community of inquiry, participants cooperate by building on each other’s ideas; questioning each other’s underlying assumptions; searching for counter-examples to each other’s generalisations; suggesting alternatives; and so on. The participants respect and value each other’s contributions, and have the intellectual courage to state an opinion.

Assessment Scope and Requirements

Assessment at Stage 1 is school based.

Evidence of Learning

The following assessment types enable students to demonstrate their learning in Stage 1 Philosophy:

* Assessment Type 1: Folio
* Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis
* Assessment Type 3: Issues Study.

For a 10-credit subject, students should provide evidence of their learning through four or five assessments. Each assessment type should have a weighting of at least 20%. Students undertake:

* at least two folio assessments
* at least one issues analysis assessment
* at least one issues study.

For a 20-credit subject, students should provide evidence of their learning through eight to ten assessments. Each assessment type should have a weighting of at least 20%. Students undertake:

* at least four folio assessments
* at least two issues analysis assessments
* at least two issues studies.

Assessment Design Criteria

The assessment design criteria are based on the learning requirements and are used by teachers to:

* clarify for the student what he or she needs to learn
* design opportunities for the student to provide evidence of his or her learning at the highest possible level of achievement.

The assessment design criteria consist of specific features that:

* students should demonstrate in their learning
* teachers look for as evidence that students have met the learning requirements.

For this subject the assessment design criteria are:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning
* critical analysis
* communication.

The specific features of these criteria are described below.

The set of assessments, as a whole, must give students opportunities to demonstrate each of the specific features by the completion of study of the subject.

Knowledge and Understanding

The specific features are as follows:

KU1 Identification and understanding of philosophical issues and philosophical positions on issues.

KU2 Knowledge and understanding of the general structure of a philosophical argument.

Reasoning

The specific features are as follows:

R1 Reasoning and use of evidence to support or contest philosophical issues and positions.

R2 Differentiation between good and bad arguments.

Critical Analysis

The specific feature is as follows:

CA1 Analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments.

Communication

The specific features are as follows:

C1 Communication of philosophical issues and positions, with conventions observed.

C2 Use of appropriate philosophical terminology, and acknowledgment of sources.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

For a 10-credit subject, students undertake at least two folio assessments. For a 20-credit subject, students undertake at least four folio assessments.

A folio assessment should provide opportunities for students to develop philosophical inquiry skills. Such skills include:

* applying skills of reasoning to solve problems
* general principles of reasoning: types of reasoning, the general structure of deductive and inductive arguments, the difference between good and bad arguments, and/or the strengths and weaknesses of arguments.

Folio assessments can be based on individual and/or group activities. Activities could include, for example, communities of inquiry, oral presentations, philosophical discussions, debates, arguments, argument analyses, forums, informal conversations in pairs, reflective pieces, role plays, essays, or multimodal presentations. Topics could arise from media articles or from issues relevant to students.

Evidence can be gathered in a range of ways, including recording of observations of group discussions, role plays, or other presentations. Individual student evidence should be identified and recorded when students have participated in group work.

A folio assessment should be a maximum of 800 words if written or a maximum of 5 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis

For a 10-credit subject, students undertake at least one issues analysis assessment. For a 20-credit subject, students undertake at least two issues analysis assessments.

An issues analysis is a guided ethical issues study. An issue is discussed by the class under the guidance of the teacher. Each student prepares an individual written response to the issue.

In a written response, students:

* identify an issue as an ethical philosophical issue
* explain the flow of logic and evidence that supports the argument
* critically analyse a variety of philosophical views on the issue
* provide evidence and reasons to support or refute counter arguments
* communicate clearly, using relevant terms.

A response should be a maximum of 800 words for a single formal essay or a maximum of 800 words for a collection of shorter pieces.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning
* critical analysis
* communication.

Assessment Type 3: Issues Study

For a 10-credit subject, students undertake at least one issues study. For a 20-credit subject, students undertake at least two issues studies.

An issues study is a student-negotiated study of a philosophical issue. Students choose at least one issue from any of the three key areas for a 10-credit subject, and at least two issues from epistemology and/or metaphysics for a 20-credit subject.

In their presentations on the issues study, students:

* identify philosophical positions on the issue
* explain reasons for a range of points of view, other than their own, on the issue
* critically analyse the views of others on the issue
* explain the flow of logic and evidence to justify their own ideas
* communicate clearly, using appropriate philosophical terminology.

The presentation format could be written, oral, or multimodal. An issues study should be a maximum of 800 words if written or a maximum of 5 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form.

For this assessment type, students demonstrate evidence of learning in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning
* critical analysis
* communication.

Performance Standards

The performance standards describe five levels of achievement, A to E.

Each level of achievement describes the knowledge, skills, and understanding that teachers refer to in deciding how well a student has demonstrated his or her learning on the basis of the evidence provided.

During the teaching and learning program the teacher gives students feedback on their learning, with reference to the performance standards.

At the student’s completion of study of a subject, the teacher makes a decision about the quality of the student’s learning by:

* referring to the performance standards
* taking into account the weighting of each assessment type
* assigning a subject grade between A and E.

Teachers can use a SACE Board school assessment grade calculator to help them to assign the subject grade. The calculator is available on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au).

Performance Standards for Stage 1 Philosophy

| - | Knowledge and Understanding | Reasoning | Critical Analysis | Communication |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Clear and perceptive identification and understanding of philosophical issues, and of philosophical positions on issues.  In-depth understanding of the general structure of a philosophical argument. | Incisive reasoning, and use of relevant evidence, to support or contest philosophical issues and positions.  Accurate differentiation between good and bad arguments. | Consistently accurate and perceptive analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Clear, coherent, and fluent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with conventions consistently observed.  Accurate and consistent use of relevant philosophical terminology, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| B | Clear and thoughtful identification and understanding of philosophical issues, and of philosophical positions on issues.  Well-informed understanding of the general structure of a philosophical argument. | Well-considered reasoning, and use of mostly relevant evidence, to support or contest philosophical issues and positions.  Mostly accurate differentiation between good and bad arguments. | Mostly accurate and well-considered analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Clear and coherent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with conventions mostly observed.  Mostly accurate and appropriate use of philosophical terminology, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| C | Generally clear identification and understanding of philosophical issues, and of some philosophical positions on issues.  Informed understanding of the general structure of a philosophical argument. | Considered reasoning, and some use of evidence, to support or contest philosophical issues and positions.  Generally accurate differentiation between good and bad arguments. | Considered analysis of some strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Competent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with some conventions observed.  Generally appropriate use of philosophical terminology, with mostly appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| D | Some recognition of philosophical issues, and awareness of a philosophical position on an issue.  Recognition of some of the general structure of a philosophical argument. | Superficial or inconsistent reasoning, with some limited use of evidence, to support or contest a philosophical issue and/or position.  Some accuracy in differentiation between good and bad arguments. | Some identification of one or more strengths and/or weaknesses of a philosophical assumption, position, and/or argument. | Partial communication of aspects of a philosophical issue and/or position.  Use of a limited range of appropriate philosophical terminology, with some acknowledgment of sources. |
| E | Limited recognition of what is philosophical in an issue.  Recognition of a structural feature of a philosophical argument. | Attempted consideration of a philosophical issue or position.  Emerging recognition of some differentiation between good and bad arguments. | Identification of a strength or weakness of a philosophical assumption, position, or argument. | Attempted communication of an aspect of a philosophical issue or position.  Limited use of any philosophical terminology, with limited acknowledgment of sources. |

Assessment Integrity

The SACE Assuring Assessment Integrity Policy outlines the principles and processes that teachers and assessors follow to assure the integrity of student assessments. This policy is available on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au) as part of the SACE Policy Framework.

The SACE Board uses a range of quality assurance processes so that the grades awarded for student achievement in the school assessment are applied consistently and fairly against the performance standards for a subject, and are comparable across all schools.

Information and guidelines on quality assurance in assessment at Stage 1 are available on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au).

Support Materials

Subject-specific Advice

Online support materials are provided for each subject and updated regularly on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au). Examples of support materials are sample learning and assessment plans, annotated assessment tasks, annotated student responses, and recommended resource materials.

Advice on Ethical Study and Research

Advice for students and teachers on ethical study and research practices is available in the guidelines on the ethical conduct of research in the SACE on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au).

Stage 2 Philosophy

Learning Scope and Requirements

Learning Requirements

The learning requirements summarise the knowledge, skills, and understanding that students are expected to develop and demonstrate through their learning in Stage 2 Philosophy.

In this subject, students are expected to:

1. identify and understand philosophical issues and positions

2. demonstrate knowledge of the role of reasoning and argument in the expression of philosophical issues and positions

3. critically analyse assumptions, positions, and arguments presented by philosophers, themselves, and others

4. formulate and argue a philosophical position

5. communicate philosophical issues and positions, using the conventions of philosophical argument.

Content

Stage 2 Philosophy is a 20-credit subject that consists of two sections:

* Philosophical Inquiry Skills
* Key Areas of Philosophical Study.

The three key areas for study are ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Students undertake an in-depth study of one topic from each key area.

Philosophical Inquiry Skills

Philosophical inquiry skills are the cognitive skills of reasoning, critical analysis, problem‑solving, and evaluation of arguments. Students study and apply the principles of reasoning, and identify forms of reasoning and the structure of argument. These skills are developed and applied throughout the Key Areas of Philosophical Study:

* ethics — a study of moral values, reasoning about what is right and wrong
* epistemology — a study of theories of knowledge and knowing
* metaphysics — a study of the nature of existence and reality (what there is in the world).

Assessing arguments is a fundamental skill that students need to develop and apply throughout Stage 2 Philosophy. Students should become familiar with the general principles of reasoning:

* types of reasoning
* the general structure of arguments
* the differences between good and bad arguments
* what makes an argument valid and what makes an argument sound
* inductive and deductive arguments.

Key Areas of Philosophical Study

Key Area 1: Ethics

Ethics is a philosophical study of moral values and reasoning about right and wrong. Ethical theories provide frameworks for understanding moral disputes and conflicting claims.

A variety of topics can be explored in a study of ethics. Those selected for this key area are:

* moral understanding
* happiness as the goal of life
* rights and responsibilities
* equality and difference.

Moral Understanding

Moral debates and moral disagreements are common features of contemporary society (e.g. as in discussions about capital punishment, euthanasia, and the use and control of drugs). Those who take part in these discussions, whether publicly or privately, are attempting to establish a body of values or set of principles to guide society about what is right and what is wrong. It can be difficult to determine what these principles are, and whether or not they are valid.

This topic focuses on moral understanding and moral decision-making.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Why act morally?
* Is being moral part of human nature?
* Are there any right answers to moral disagreements?
* Does the end justify the means?

Happiness as the Goal of Life

There are certain large questions that everyone considers at some time. One such question is the meaning or purpose of life. Some might say that the purpose of life is to pursue happiness, whereas others might argue that people should try to lead an ethical life, by treating others well and making the world a better place. Yet others would suggest that life has no purpose at all.

This topic covers different conceptions of a ‘good’ life and the possible consequences of these conceptions in deciding practical questions about which social and political policies to support and the kind of world we want to live in.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Is a life of pleasure better than a life of virtue?
* What have philosophers thought about the purpose of life?
* Is a good life for human beings the same as a good life for animals?

Rights and Responsibilities

Many claims are made about rights, who has them, and who does not have them. Do all human beings have the same rights or can some lay claim to special rights?

It is necessary to determine the nature of rights in order to resolve a range of socially vital issues about who has rights and what these rights consist of. It is also important to consider the sphere of moral rights: whether or not other sentient creatures have the same rights as human beings, and the responsibilities of human beings to these creatures and to the environment as a whole.

This topic deals with moral rights, the resolution of conflicting rights, and people’s obligations to each other.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Do we have a moral obligation to future generations?
* Do we have the right to stop people from doing what they want?
* Do animals have rights?
* Do we have a moral obligation to protect wilderness areas?

Equality and Difference

Dealing with difference is one of the most important issues of the present age. Are we all just human beings underneath a layer of personality, femininity or masculinity, racial or ethnic identity, or do these layers constitute what we really are?

This topic focuses on the ways in which human difference is perceived, and whether or not there is an essential human nature.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Does equality mean treating all people the same or treating people differently?
* Is there a fundamental human nature common to all people?
* Can equal opportunity legislation alone secure equality in the workplace?
* What would an equal and just society look like?

Key Area 2: Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge and the justification of belief. This key area engages students in discussions about the kinds of beliefs that can be justified and those that cannot be justified, and the relationship between what can be seen or perceived through the senses and what can be known.

A variety of topics can be explored in a study of epistemology. Those selected for this key area are:

* ways of knowing
* perception
* scepticism
* relativism.

Ways of Knowing

Where does knowledge come from? Historically, philosophers have answered this question in two ways. Some thinkers have claimed that the primary (or even the only) source of knowledge is experience, whereas others have claimed that knowledge comes mainly (or solely) from the use of reason. Many modern philosophers hold that knowledge is acquired through a procedure that involves both reason and experience.

This topic covers the different ways in which knowledge is described (e.g. scientific knowledge, historical knowledge, mathematical knowledge, moral knowledge, aesthetic knowledge, and so on).

Students could examine the following questions:

* What is the scientific method, and how does it differ from the procedures that lead to mathematical knowledge?
* Is the scientific method as reliable as we are led to believe by some people in society?
* What is the relationship between knowledge and belief?

Perception

Many people take it for granted that what they perceive through their senses actually exists. However, objects can be perceived differently by different observers, or by the same observer in different conditions. The perception of colours is even more puzzling. It is not clear whether colours are properties of objects or creations of the mind. These questions make perception a very interesting issue and have led many philosophers to say that we perceive ideas, impressions, or representations of physical objects rather than the objects themselves. If this is true, there is a gap between the evidence, our ‘sensory data’, and our claims about the existence of physical objects.

This topic examines the link between perceptions and knowledge, and beliefs about the physical world.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Does the fact that our senses sometimes mislead us mean that perception is not reliable as a source of evidence about the world?
* Are colours in objects or are they only in our minds? Are physical objects directly perceivable?

Scepticism

Two views are commonly stated: that we cannot rely on knowledge gained from what our senses tell us; and that, because experts contradict one another, we cannot know something with any degree of certainty. Both views express what is called a sceptical attitude about what can be known. However, there is a difference between stating that we do not know and stating that we cannot know. Philosophical scepticism deals with the second of these two statements — the claim that knowledge is not possible.

This topic introduces students to the philosophical arguments about scepticism and the replies to these arguments.

Students could examine the following questions:

* How do we know that reality is not a dream?
* Can we be certain of anything?
* How do we know that our world is not virtual?

Relativism

There are many forms of relativism but all assert the same two general principles: that all points of view are equally valid, and that they are relative to a particular framework or standpoint (e.g. personal, cultural, or historical). The different kinds of relativism can be distinguished according to the object they seek to relativise.

This topic focuses on cognitive relativism, which asserts the relativity of truth and, given the close connection between truth and knowledge, the relativity of knowledge.

Students could examine the following questions:

* What are the standard objections to relativism?
* How can we decide between alternatives?
* Are there universal truths?

Key Area 3: Metaphysics

Metaphysics explores existence and reality taken as a whole. Metaphysics can also include exploring the world beyond sensory experience as a way of critically examining things that are taken for granted, or searching for things that exist.

A variety of topics can be explored in a study of metaphysics. Those selected for this key area are:

* freedom and determinism
* reason and the existence of God
* existentialism and humanism
* bodies, minds, and persons.

Freedom and Determinism

Most human beings believe they have free will: that when they are in difficult situations they are able to deliberate and make up their minds about what to do. In short, it seems to be common sense that people are able to make free choices between alternative actions. In this topic students consider arguments for and against the view that everything, including human action, is determined in advance by the causes that precede it.

This topic introduces students to the arguments for determinism, to arguments that attempt to reconcile determinism with free will, and to the consequences that determinism has for moral responsibility.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Can we be free if there are causes for all our actions?
* Is a murderer responsible for his or her actions?
* Is everything we do determined by forces outside our control?

Reason and the Existence of God

Belief in God or a supreme being can be found throughout history and in many cultures. People’s belief in the existence of God is mainly a matter of faith. However, some philosophers have attempted to demonstrate God’s existence through rational argument.

This topic covers the range of arguments that have been used for and against the existence of God or a supreme being.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Does God exist?
* Is the existence of God necessary to explain the existence of the universe?
* Is God’s existence necessary to explain the existence of complex things, especially living things?
* Does the existence of evil pose a problem for a belief in the existence of God?

Existentialism and Humanism

The central claim of existentialism, as expressed by Jean-Paul Sartre, is that for human beings existence comes before essence. By this, Sartre means that first people exist and then they reflect on their existence and define themselves. This self-definition determines their nature or essence.

This topic focuses on whether or not there is a predetermined human nature before people reflect on themselves, and whether or not all other things in the universe come into being with a previously determined essence.

Students could examine the following questions:

* What are the consequences of existentialism for everyday life?
* Are we really free in the radical sense that Sartre claims?
* Can we simply make up our own natures?
* Are we so radically different from everything else in the universe?

Bodies, Minds, and Persons

Sometimes simple questions can be the hardest to answer. Some questions that have engaged philosophers are:

* What am I?
* Am I more than my physical body?
* What kind of thing is my mind, and what is the relationship between my body and my mind?
* Does the mind control the body or the body control the mind, or both?

This topic focuses on the theories philosophers have put forward to explain the nature of conscious experience.

Students could examine the following questions:

* Can a computer be conscious?
* How is a human mind different from a computer program?
* Are human beings more than just very complex machines?
* Is the mind distinct from the brain?

Assessment Scope and Requirements

All Stage 2 subjects have a school assessment component and an external assessment component.

Evidence of Learning

The following assessment types enable students to demonstrate their learning in Stage 2 Philosophy:

School Assessment (70%)

* Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis (25%)
* Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis (45%)

External Assessment (30%)

* Assessment Type 3: Issues Study (30%).

Students should provide evidence of their learning through six assessments, including the external assessment component. Students undertake:

* two argument analysis assessments
* three issues analysis assessments (one for each key area)
* one issues study.

Assessment Design Criteria

The assessment design criteria are based on the learning requirements and are used by:

* teachers to clarify for the student what he or she needs to learn
* teachers and assessors to design opportunities for the student to provide evidence of his or her learning at the highest possible level of achievement.

The assessment design criteria consist of specific features that:

* students should demonstrate in their learning
* teachers and assessors look for as evidence that students have met the learning requirements.

For this subject the assessment design criteria are:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning and argument
* critical analysis
* communication.

The specific features of these criteria are described below.

The set of assessments, as a whole, must give students opportunities to demonstrate each of the specific features by the completion of study of the subject.

Knowledge and Understanding

The specific features are as follows:

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of philosophical issues and positions.

KU2 Understanding of reasons and arguments used by philosophers on issues and positions.

Reasoning and Argument

The specific features are as follows:

RA1 Explanation of the philosophical nature of issues and positions.

RA2 Explanation of the flow of logic and evidence of arguments leading to conclusions.

RA3 Formulation and defence of philosophical positions.

Critical Analysis

The specific feature is as follows:

CA1 Critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments.

Communication

The specific features are as follows:

C1 Communication of philosophical issues and positions, using the conventions of philosophical argument.

C2 Use of appropriate philosophical terminology, and acknowledgment of sources.

School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Argument Analysis (25%)

Students undertake two argument analysis assessments. In each they consider a different type of text chosen from, for example, popular news programs, poetry, film, lyrics, interest group pronouncements, and reports.

Students apply their knowledge of reasoning and argument in identifying and analysing the arguments of others. They provide evidence and reasons to support or refute counter arguments. Students may compare how evidence for the premises of argument is developed in particular forms (e.g. through symbolism, sound, images, irony, or analogy). Students analyse the logical strength of arguments.

The presentation may be written, oral, or in multimodal form. An argument analysis assessment should be a maximum of 1000 words if written or a maximum of 7 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form. At least one assessment should be presented in writing.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* reasoning and argument
* critical analysis
* communication.

Assessment Type 2: Issues Analysis (45%)

Students undertake three issues analysis assessments, one for each of the key areas: ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Students identify:

* why the issue chosen is a philosophical issue
* different responses to the philosophical issue
* what position they will take in response to the philosophical issue
* a justifiable defence for the position taken
* how they will communicate this position to others.

Teachers negotiate with students the conditions under which this assessment type is assessed. The presentation may be written, oral, or in multimodal form and could include role plays, oral presentations, written arguments, scripted dialogues, multimedia presentations, responses to letters to the editor, films, or videos.

Presentations should be a maximum of 1500 words if written or a maximum of 10 minutes if oral, or the equivalent in multimodal form. At least one assessment should be presented in writing.

For this assessment type, students provide evidence of their learning primarily in relation to the following assessment design criteria:

* knowledge and understanding
* reasoning and argument
* communication.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Issues Study (30%)

Students undertake one issues study.

They examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas, choosing the issue in negotiation with their teacher. Students consider the following questions:

* Why is it a philosophical issue?
* What positions do various philosophers hold?
* What are the philosophers’ reasons for holding these positions?
* What objections or counter examples are relevant to these positions?
* What is the student’s own position, and why?

The issues study is to be presented in written form, but it does not need to be in an essay format and could include dialogue or any other written form. The study should be a maximum of 2000 words.

All specific features of the assessment design criteria for this subject are assessed in the issues study.

Performance Standards

The performance standards describe five levels of achievement, A to E.

Each level of achievement describes the knowledge, skills, and understanding that teachers and assessors refer to in deciding how well a student has demonstrated his or her learning on the basis of the evidence provided.

During the teaching and learning program the teacher gives students feedback on their learning, with reference to the performance standards.

At the student’s completion of study of each school assessment type, the teacher makes a decision about the quality of the student’s learning by:

* referring to the performance standards
* assigning a grade between A and Efor the assessment type.

The student’s school assessment and external assessment are combined for a final result, which is reported as a grade between A and E.

Performance Standards for Stage 2 Philosophy

| - | Knowledge and Understanding | Reasoning and Argument | Critical Analysis | Communication |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Consistently clear and perceptive knowledge and understanding of philosophical issues and positions.  In-depth and well-informed understanding of reasons and arguments used by philosophers on issues and positions. | Insightful and coherent explanation of the philosophical nature of issues and positions.  Insightful and coherent explanation of the flow of logic and evidence of arguments leading to conclusions.  Coherent and convincing formulation and defence of positions taken. | Perceptive critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Consistently clear, coherent, and fluent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with appropriate conventions consistently observed.  Accurate, consistent, and discerning use of philosophical terminology, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| B | Clear and thoughtful knowledge and understanding of philosophical issues and positions.  Well-informed understanding of reasons and arguments used by philosophers on issues and positions. | Thoughtful and clear explanation of the philosophical nature of issues and positions.  Thoughtful and clear explanation of the flow of logic and evidence of arguments leading to conclusions.  Convincing formulation and defence of positions taken. | Well-considered critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Clear and coherent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with appropriate conventions mostly observed.  Mostly accurate and relevant use of philosophical terminology, with appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| C | Generally clear knowledge and understanding of philosophical issues and positions.  Informed understanding of some reasons and arguments used by philosophers on issues and positions. | Considered and generally clear explanation of the philosophical nature of issues and positions.  Considered and generally clear explanation of the flow of logic and evidence of arguments leading to conclusions.  Considered formulation and defence of positions taken. | Considered analysis of some strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and arguments. | Competent communication of philosophical issues and positions, with some appropriate conventions observed.  Generally appropriate use of philosophical terminology, with mostly appropriate acknowledgment of sources. |
| D | Some recognition and awareness of a few philosophical issues and positions.  Identification of some reasons or arguments used by philosophers on an issue and/or a position. | Partial or superficial description of the philosophical nature of one or more issues and/or positions.  Some consideration of evidence of arguments leading to conclusions.  Partial formulation and defence of positions taken. | Some description of strengths and weaknesses of philosophical assumptions, positions, and/or arguments. | Partial communication of aspects of a philosophical issue and/or position, with inconsistent use of a limited range of appropriate conventions.  Use of a limited range of appropriate philosophical terminology, with some acknowledgment of sources. |
| E | Emerging recognition of what is philosophical in an issue or position.  Attempted identification of elements of a reason or argument used by a philosopher on an issue or a position. | Attempted description of the nature of a philosophical issue or position.  Emerging awareness of the need to use evidence to develop an argument or position.  Emerging awareness of one or more elements of a good argument. | Identification of a strength or weakness of a philosophical assumption, position, or argument. | Attempted communication of an aspect of a philosophical issue or position.  Limited use of any philosophical terminology, with limited acknowledgment of sources. |

Assessment Integrity

The SACE Assuring Assessment Integrity Policy outlines the principles and processes that teachers and assessors follow to assure the integrity of student assessments. This policy is available on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au) as part of the SACE Policy Framework.

The SACE Board uses a range of quality assurance processes so that the grades awarded for student achievement, in both the school assessment and the external assessment, are applied consistently and fairly against the performance standards for a subject, and are comparable across all schools.

Information and guidelines on quality assurance in assessment at Stage 2 are available on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au).

Support Materials

Subject-specific Advice

Online support materials are provided for each subject and updated regularly on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au). Examples of support materials are sample learning and assessment plans, annotated assessment tasks, annotated student responses, and recommended resource materials.

Advice on Ethical Study and Research

Advice for students and teachers on ethical study and research practices is available in the guidelines on the ethical conduct of research in the SACE on the SACE website (www.sace.sa.edu.au).