Philosophy

Degree options in the Faculty of Arts or Faculty of Science

MA (Single Honours Degree)
Philosophy

MA (Joint Honours Degrees)
Philosophy and one of:
- Ancient History
- Arabic
- Art History
- Biblical Studies
- Classical Studies
- Classics
- Comparative Literature
- Economics
- English
- Film Studies
- French
- Geography
- German
- Greek
- International Relations

Available With Integrated Year Abroad – see Modern Languages.

BSc (Joint Honours Degrees)
Philosophy and one of:
- Biology
- Computer Science
- Mathematics
- Physics
- Statistics

Entrance Requirements

Obtaining the following grades will not guarantee you a place as we consider all aspects of every application, including the Personal Statement.

SQA Highers: AABB**
GCE A-Levels: ABB**
International Baccalaureate Points: 35

** For BSc degrees – at least two Highers or one A-Level must include Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Computing Science or equivalent, Geography, Geology, Physics, Psychology.

For full Faculty Entrance Requirements, see page 53.

For degrees combining more than one subject, the subject with the higher Entrance Requirements determines the grades you need. You will also need to meet any further subject-specific Entrance Requirements as outlined on their pages.

For further country-specific qualifications and pre-degree foundation programmes see:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/study/international
Do I need previous knowledge of this subject? – No.

Features

* A Philosophy degree from St Andrews is held in high regard throughout the academic world.
* In their final year, significant numbers of our Philosophy undergraduates secure places on graduate programmes at Oxford, Cambridge, St Andrews or at leading universities in the United States.
* Philosophy can be pursued as a Single Honours degree, but it also combines naturally with many other subjects, such as Classics, International Relations, Psychology, Theology or Mathematics. It can also be combined with various science subjects.
* Philosophy staff at St Andrews work in a broad spectrum of disciplines, from logic and metaphysics to moral and legal philosophy and beyond. As a result, we offer a wider variety of courses than you might find elsewhere, within a flexible modular system.
* Each year we aim to hold a 'reading party' for final-year students and staff in the Scottish Highlands.
* The undergraduate Philosophy Society is one of the largest student societies in the University. It organises many talks, debates and social events throughout the academic year attracting internationally renowned speakers, and it publishes its own philosophy journal, Aporia, to which students are invited to contribute.
* Philosophy was rated top in Scotland and fifth in the UK in the UK Research Excellence Framework 2014.

Facilities and resources

The Philosophy Department is housed in Edgecliffe, a nineteenth-century building with beautiful views out over St Andrews Bay. The view from the library makes it a lovely place to work.

What will I study?

Philosophy is an exploration of some of the oldest and most vexing questions asked by human beings. What differentiates truth from falsehood, and reality from appearance? How is the mind related to the body? Are we really free in our decisions and actions, or is freedom an illusion? Are the things we regard as valuable good in themselves, or good only by custom and convention? Can a work of art be immoral? What justifies some in exercising power over others? Do we need a rational justification for religious belief, and if so, does one exist? For over 2,500 years human beings have been trying to develop systematic answers to these questions.

At St Andrews, we try to familiarise you with views put forward by the principal figures of the philosophical tradition, and provide you with the means of rationally and independently assessing your arguments. Learning philosophy is therefore as much about acquiring skills of criticism and analysis, clear thinking and principled debate, as it is about learning a specific subject matter.
“As a Philosophy student, you will be asked the question ‘what is philosophy?’ on many occasions. While there is no simple answer, the skills that you will learn and the confidence that you will develop by considering some of life’s biggest questions is truly unique. Studying at St Andrews will give you the opportunity to discuss your work with leading practitioners in an environment that naturally inspires philosophical study.”

Ben (Manchester, England)

Training in the sort of precise and effective reading, and the clear thinking and writing required for all philosophical study makes a good preparation for many careers. The critical thinking developed by the study of philosophy is highly valued by many employers.

Staff at St Andrews are at the forefront of research in their varied fields. This expertise and enthusiasm is conveyed at all levels of teaching. There is a flourishing graduate programme, and a busy schedule of conferences, symposia and special lectures with speakers from all over the world. St Andrews is also home to one of the most respected international philosophy journals, the Philosophical Quarterly.

We offer a wide range of module choices in every year of study.

Indicative programme information

First and Second Years

(1 x 20-credit core module + 60 credits of optional modules)

First year teaching allows you to study some of the great books in philosophy, and introduces you to fundamental philosophical questions discussed by philosophers from the beginnings of Greek antiquity right up until the present day. These questions can be abstract and theoretical, for example how to define knowledge or how to relate the mind and the body, or practical, for example what kinds of obligations we have to others, and how we ought to live. There are specific subjects you have to cover if you want to continue with philosophy, but there are several options to choose from, even at the introductory level.

In second year, there is further opportunity to study the history of philosophy and to learn about intermediate logic, the philosophy of language, epistemology, moral philosophy and aesthetics. You will be able to explore more deeply some of the questions you will have worked on in first year, and lay the foundation required for an Honours degree in Philosophy.

Honours – Third and Fourth Years (core module(s) at 3000 level; plus 4000-level optional modules)

At Honours, you will take at least one 3000-level module in your Junior Honours year, with a focus on reading core texts in a wide range of philosophical topics; alongside this, and in your Senior Honours year, you will choose from a wide variety of advanced options, including topics in epistemology (the study of knowledge), metaphysics, formal logic, the philosophies of logic, mind, and language, applied ethics, ethical and political theory, metaethics, aesthetics, and the philosophies of film, creativity, law, and religion, as well as texts in the history of philosophy, such as Scottish philosophy, Kant, or twentieth-century philosophy.

Study abroad

As a student of Philosophy, you may apply to participate in our Erasmus+ exchange. In 2016 - 2017 this is with Aarhus University in Denmark, where some classes are taught in English. For options available during your intended period of study, see: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/studyabroad/outgoingstudents

For further information about eligibility, the application and selection process, and costs involved, please see: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/studyabroad

You may apply to study abroad under the University’s St Andrews Abroad programme. See page 46.

Typical class sizes and teaching information

First Year: lectures 120 - 220, tutorials 7 - 9
Second Year: lectures 40 - 120, tutorials 7 - 9
Honours: lectures 10 - 50, seminars 10

First and second year teaching involves both formal lectures and informal tutorials, in which you discuss your ideas, questions and problems with your tutor and with fellow students. There are also examples classes to support the teaching of formal logic. In Honours, teaching is often conducted in seminars, where you may often be asked to present and discuss your own work.

Typical methods of assessment

All 1000- and 2000-level Philosophy modules are assessed by equal measures of coursework and written examinations. This pattern is continued in some Honours modules, while others are assessed solely by coursework, with a variety of elements.

Scholarships

The University awards needs-based Entrant Scholarships to students in Philosophy. Further information at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/scholarships

Careers

Recent graduates have found openings in local government, television production (Sky Sports), Oddbins as a wine adviser, as a public information intern for the United Nations Commission for Refugees, the National Health Service, the Co-operative Bank, insurance, the Crown Prosecution Service, publishing, and teaching English in Japan.

It is not uncommon for St Andrews Philosophy graduates to enter the legal profession after a conversion course or a second degree in law. A substantial proportion of Philosophy graduates choose to pursue an academic career. For more information: http://bit.ly/sta-philosophy-careers

Please see page 36 for details of the University Careers Centre.