

STAGE 1  
AND  
STAGE 2

# Philosophy

C U R R I C U L U M   S T A T E M E N T S   2 0 0 9



Government  
of South Australia

**SACE**  
Board of SA

## **EQUITY STATEMENT**

These curriculum statements are consistent with equal opportunity and human rights legislation.

Each curriculum statement is constructed using the principles of the SACE Board of South Australia's Curriculum and Assessment Policy which identify the student as the centre of the teaching, learning, and assessment processes within the SACE. Inclusivity and flexibility are guiding standards that the SACE Board uses in determining curriculum and assessment practices that support students in achieving the requirements of the SACE.

## **SACE STUDENT QUALITIES**

It is intended that a student who completes the SACE will:

1. be an active, confident participant in the learning process (*confidence*).
2. take responsibility for his or her own learning and training (*responsibility, self-direction*).
3. respond to challenging learning opportunities, pursue excellence, and achieve in a diverse range of learning and training situations (*challenge, excellence, achievement*).
4. work and learn individually and with others in and beyond school to achieve personal or team goals (*independence, collaboration, identity*).
5. apply logical, critical, and innovative thinking to a range of problems and ideas (*thinking, enterprise, problem-solving, future*).
6. use language effectively to engage with the cultural and intellectual ideas of others (*communication, literacy*).
7. select, integrate, and apply numerical and spatial concepts and techniques (*numeracy*).
8. be a competent, creative, and critical user of information and communication technologies (*information technology*).
9. have the skills and capabilities required for effective local and global citizenship, including a concern for others (*citizenship, interdependence, responsibility towards the environment, responsibility towards others*).
10. have positive attitudes towards further education and training, employment, and lifelong learning (*lifelong learning*).

## **ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS AND KEY COMPETENCIES**

These curriculum statements offer a number of opportunities to develop essential learnings and key competencies as students engage with their learning. Curriculum support materials, with examples of how these can be developed while students are undertaking programs of study in these subjects, will be available on the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)).

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## ***1-unit and 2-unit Subjects***

A 1-unit subject consists of 50 to 60 hours of programmed time. It is normally considered to be a one-semester or half-year subject. A 2-unit subject consists of 100 to 120 hours of programmed time. It is considered to be a full-year subject.

## ***Accreditation***

These curriculum statements were accredited by the Board from 2003. This accreditation is effective until further notice.

The SACE Board informs schools of changes and amendments approved during the period of accreditation. Refer to the curriculum statements on the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)) for future changes.



## **RATIONALE**

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Philosophy is part of life: it shapes what 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 round them. Historically, philosophers have been recognised as teachers of wisdom whose contributions have helped to form society and its visions for the future.

Philosophical issues involve questioning people's assumptions, beliefs, and reasons for holding particular views. In these subjects students can critically evaluate a range of ideas and theories in their own culture and in other cultures. Students are encouraged to become independent thinkers who reflect on philosophical issues in the light of their own and other people's experiences.

Central to the study of philosophy is the investigation of problems that arise from identified philosophical issues and are not amenable to empirical methods of verification. Consequently, philosophical problems tend to provoke disagreement and foster a variety of views and theories about the nature of the world. Investigation of these problems requires skills of critical reasoning, developed through an understanding of reasoning and the foundations of argument analysis. Understanding how arguments work is essential to being a good reasoner and a creative problem-solver. In these subjects students will learn how to think their way through problems, develop clarity of thought, and present ideas, evidence, and reasons in an orderly way.

These aims are achieved by involving students in discussions and debates within which philosophical issues will be identified and critically analysed. Students also undertake text-based analyses in which they interact with the thinking of philosophers of the present and the past in developing logically and ethically defensible ideas for preferred futures.

## **ADVICE FOR STUDENTS**

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The students who will benefit from studying these subjects are those who want to learn to think more effectively, who want opportunities to consider and debate issues, who are questioning aspects of their own lives, and who want to explore the basis for knowledge and belief.

Students will have the opportunity to identify philosophical issues and methods, enquire into philosophical issues, and engage in philosophical argument. By examining the philosophical positions of other people, students can develop and communicate their own philosophical positions.

The knowledge that students will gain about the role of reasoning and argument will benefit their understanding of philosophical issues and positions, and can be transferred to other aspects of their lives. Students will learn how to think their way through problems, develop clarity of thought, and present ideas, evidence, and reasons in an orderly way. They can also apply these skills to studies in other subjects.

### **Student Research**

When conducting research, in both the school and the wider community, students must be aware that their actions have the potential to affect other people positively or negatively. In its policy on students as researchers, the SACE Board sets out its commitment to supporting students in ethical research. Students who are conducting research should follow the Guidelines on Conducting Ethical Research for the SACE. See the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)).

### **Pathways**

The study of Stage 1 Philosophy and Stage 2 Philosophy provides a basis for multiple pathways, because philosophical skills and understandings can be applied to a wide range of situations and livelihoods. Philosophy helps people to participate effectively in their communities and in society.

Philosophy provides a pathway to further study at tertiary level. Philosophers find employment in a wide range of areas such as law, government, entertainment, education, corporate business, and tourism.

### **SACE Classification**

For the purposes of SACE completion, Stage 1 Philosophy and Stage 2 Philosophy are classified as Group 1 subjects.

## **GOALS**

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These subjects are designed to develop students’:

- respect for intellectual integrity as a human value;
- ability to identify the nature of philosophical issues and methods;
- ability to enquire into philosophical issues and engage in philosophical argument;
- skills of creative and independent critical thinking in articulating and justifying philosophical positions;
- understanding of the purpose and value of philosophical thinking and reflection in providing a framework for reasoned action.

## **STRANDS**

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The study of Philosophy is described in the following four strands:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Place, Space, and Environment
- Societies and Cultures
- Social Systems.

### **Time, Continuity, and Change**

This strand deals with philosophical understandings about the social world and the natural world, and how they have changed over time and could lead to other possible futures. It emphasises the critical evaluation of these understandings, their historical context, and their relevance in guiding both the present and possible futures.

### **Place, Space, and Environment**

This strand deals with the concepts of, and philosophical arguments about, environmental sustainability and the intrinsic value of the environment; an investigation of our logical and moral relationship to future generations and people; and the formulation of logically and morally defensible positions on issues such as globalisation, sustainable development, and conservation.

### **Societies and Cultures**

This strand deals with the function of moral codes in societies. It explores the notion of a fundamental moral principle; the role of circumstances in shaping moral codes in societies and cultures; the extent to which we can point to universally defensible underlying moral principles, and the logical and moral basis on which any such principles can be justified, both now and in future societies.

### **Social Systems**

This strand deals with the concepts of social justice and the common good, and the procedures of rational decision-making. Competing concepts of social justice are part of this strand, which also identifies underlying philosophical views. Central to this strand are the idea of decision-making aimed at the common good and an understanding of the processes this involves. Also central to this strand is an investigation of the notion of rights, the distinction between political and human rights, and philosophical questions about the origins of human rights and the resolution of conflicting rights, in the past, in the present, and in possible futures.



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# **PHILOSOPHY**

## **STAGE 1 CURRICULUM STATEMENT**

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## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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At the end of the program in Stage 1 Philosophy, students should be able to:

1. identify philosophical issues and positions;
2. understand philosophical issues and positions;
3. provide reasons to support philosophical issues and positions;
4. use skills of critical thinking to investigate and test assumptions, positions, and arguments;
5. communicate philosophical issues and positions.

## **STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION**

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This subject is designed to be undertaken in either a 1-unit or a 2-unit form.

The 2-unit subject consists of:

- the compulsory section ‘Philosophical Issues and Philosophical Enquiry Skills’, which introduces the three key areas of philosophy;
- two guided ethical issues studies;
- two student-negotiated issues studies.

The 1-unit subject consists of:

- the compulsory section ‘Philosophical Issues and Philosophical Enquiry Skills’, which introduces the three key areas of philosophy;
- one guided ethical issues study;
- one student-negotiated issues study.

The issues studies can be taken from any of the three key areas outlined in ‘Philosophical Issues and Philosophical Enquiry Skills’ on pages 8 and 9.

## SCOPE

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### **PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES AND PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY SKILLS**

This section of the course uses a problem-based approach conducted through a ‘community of enquiry’. Issues for discussion are drawn from the three key areas of philosophy — ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Central to this subject is the development of sound skills of critical reasoning that will enable students to take a position on issues in the three key areas by analysing text in which these issues have been expressed, argued, and developed by philosophers. These skills form a foundation for philosophical investigation throughout Stage 1 Philosophy.

### **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 areas described below.

#### **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 is truth?
- 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 a person?
- Are we free?
- What is the relationship between the mind and the body?

### **Philosophical Enquiry Skills**

Philosophical enquiry skills are the cognitive skills of reasoning, critical analysis, problem-solving, and evaluation of arguments. Students will be introduced to the general principles of reasoning:

- Types of reasoning
- The general structure of arguments
- The difference between good and bad arguments.

These skills will continue to be developed, together with students' problem-solving skills in analysing an identified philosophical problem.

Students are encouraged to explore philosophical issues within a 'community of enquiry'. The community of enquiry is a collaborative model based on dialogue. It is intended to encourage students to reflect more deeply on philosophical problems by understanding how philosophers have thought about those problems. This can be achieved by the analysis of philosophical texts, which will enable students to extend and deepen their understanding of philosophical problems.

## **GUIDED ETHICAL ISSUES STUDY**

A guided ethical issues study should develop the skills necessary for identifying, discussing, evaluating, and responding to a philosophical issue drawn from one of the three key areas.

A guided ethical issues study:

- focuses on an issue;
- provokes open critical thought and discussion on a negotiated issue from a philosophical perspective;
- demonstrates the skills of critical thinking;
- identifies, analyses, and evaluates a variety of philosophical views on the issue.

## **STUDENT-NEGOTIATED ISSUES STUDY**

A student-negotiated issues study should be a student-directed study of a philosophical issue chosen from one of the three key areas.

The student-negotiated issues study provides opportunities for students to:

- think critically by questioning ideas, beliefs, and values associated with a particular issue;
- explore, analyse, evaluate, and justify their personal points of view on a particular issue;
- consider and appraise the validity of a range of points of view other than their own on a particular issue;
- clearly communicate their ideas and position on a particular issue;
- seek and apply evidence to justify their ideas and position on a particular issue.

## **ASSESSMENT**

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Assessment is subject to the requirements, policies, and procedures of the Board.

One of the purposes of assessment is to measure the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes of a program based on this curriculum statement.

The three assessment components for Stage 1 Philosophy have been selected to provide a balanced assessment of all the learning outcomes in this curriculum statement. The description of each assessment component indicates the learning outcomes that the component is designed to assess primarily. However, in designing their assessment plan, teachers may choose to include additional learning outcomes for a particular task, or exclude others.

Assessment in Stage 1 Philosophy consists of the following components. The weighting of each component should be between 10% and 50%.

Assessment Component 1: Communication

Assessment Component 2: Issues Study

Assessment Component 3: Student-negotiated Task.

In each 1-unit subject, students should be given between four and six summative assessment tasks. Students should complete at least one task from each assessment component.

The assessment specifications and the criteria for judging performance that are outlined on the following pages reflect the learning outcomes that each assessment component is designed to assess. The criteria for judging performance state the qualities or features that assessors will look for and are followed by questions that aim to clarify for the student precisely what is being assessed.

In most cases the clarifying questions will apply to the specific assessment task that students have undertaken. However, in some cases, particularly when students and teachers negotiate and design aspects of an assessment task, teachers may need to vary the clarifying questions.

It is important that students clearly understand the criteria for judging performance before they undertake an assessment task.

### **Student Research**

When conducting research, in both the school and the wider community, students must be aware that their actions have the potential to affect other people positively or negatively. In its policy on students as researchers, the SACE Board sets out its commitment to supporting students in ethical research. Students who are conducting research should follow the Guidelines on Conducting Ethical Research for the SACE. See the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)).



## **SACE Word-count Policy**

The SACE Word-count Policy states that all words used in the body of the text are counted for assessment purposes. This includes all words that the assessor reads, from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

The word-count includes:

- headings
- direct quotations
- in-text references
- footnotes that are used as explanatory notes.

The word-count does not include:

- the title/question page
- the contents page
- words in tables, flow charts, graphs, and diagrams
- the reference list or bibliography (including footnotes that are used as references)
- appendixes.

## **Assessment Component 1: Communication**

This assessment component is designed to assess primarily Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5.

This curriculum statement requires students to interact in a range of classroom discussions, arguments, forums, debates, reports, and informal conversations, as an individual, in groups, and as members of a class. The range and extent of these interactions should be constructed to allow opportunities for all students to participate and demonstrate their levels of achievement against the learning outcomes.

### **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in communication will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

*identification*

- How effectively does the student identify a selected issue as a philosophical issue?
- How well does the student identify philosophical positions on the issue?

*understanding*

- How well does the student understand and explain the philosophical issue and positions?

*argument*

- How well does the student gather evidence to support or contest a philosophical issue and positions?
- To what extent does the student provide reasons in developing an argument to support or contest a philosophical issue and positions?

*communication*

- How clearly does the student explain the issue or position?

## **Assessment Component 2: Issues Study**

This assessment component is designed to assess primarily Learning Outcomes 1, 3, and 5.

The issues study encourages students to respond in writing to philosophical issues.

The issues study should be up to a maximum of 500 words and can range from a collection of shorter responses to a single formal essay. (See above for information on the SACE Word-count Policy.)

## **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in the issues study will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

### *identification*

- How effectively does the student identify a selected issue as a philosophical issue?
- How well does the student identify philosophical positions on the issue?

### *argument*

- How well does the student gather evidence to support or contest a philosophical issue and positions?
- To what extent does the student provide reasons in developing an argument to support or contest a philosophical issue and positions?

### *communication*

- How clearly does the student explain the issue and positions, and set out reasons to support the issue and positions in the chosen written format?

## **Assessment Component 3: Student-negotiated Task**

This assessment component is designed to assess primarily Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Students should choose an issue that enables them to apply and extend the understanding of the skills of philosophical enquiry and critical reasoning that they have developed during the course. The method of presentation should not be restricted to writing but could include formats such as audiovisual, multimedia, role-play, and photographic display. Any written section should be up to a maximum of 500 words. (Refer to page 13 for information on the SACE Word-count Policy.)

## **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in the student-negotiated task will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

### *identification*

- How effectively does the student identify a selected issue as a philosophical issue?
- How well does the student identify philosophical positions on the issue?

### *understanding*

- How well does the student understand and explain the philosophical issue and positions?

### *critical thinking*

- How effectively does the student use the skills of reasoning, critical analysis, problem-solving, and evaluation of arguments?
- To what extent does the student evaluate the general structure of an argument?
- How well does the student distinguish between good and bad argument(s)?

### *communication*

- How clearly does the student explain the issue and positions, using a chosen format?

## **SUPPORT MATERIALS**

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Useful support materials are available on the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)), for example:

- annotated work samples
- assessment exemplars
- assessment plans
- illustrative programs
- performance standards
- resources
- teaching and learning strategies.



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# **PHILOSOPHY**

## **STAGE 2 CURRICULUM STATEMENT**

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## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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At the end of the program in Stage 2 Philosophy, students should be able to:

1. identify and analyse philosophical issues and positions;
2. demonstrate knowledge of the role of reasoning and argument in the expression of philosophical issues and positions;
3. formulate and argue a philosophical position;
4. use skills of critical thinking to investigate and test assumptions, positions, and arguments presented by themselves and others;
5. communicate philosophical issues and positions.

## **STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION**

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

- Philosophical Enquiry Skills
- Key Areas of Philosophical Study.

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

## **SCOPE**

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### **PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY SKILLS**

Philosophical enquiry skills are the cognitive skills of reasoning, critical analysis, problem-solving, and evaluation of arguments. Students will study and apply the principles of reasoning, and identify forms of reasoning and the structure of argument. These skills will be developed and applied throughout ‘Key Areas of Philosophical Study’.

Assessing arguments is a fundamental skill that students need to develop and apply throughout the course. 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 issues can be explored in a study of ethics. Those selected for this curriculum statement 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, for example, 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?
- Do the ends 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 living 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 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 will engage 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 curriculum statement 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, others 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, for example, 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?
- 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 we are not dreaming?
- 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, personal, cultural, historical, and so on. 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 curriculum statement 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 do. In short, it seems to be common sense that people are able to make free choices between alternative actions. In this topic students will 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, 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. One such question that has engaged philosophers is: ‘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 very complex machines?
- Is the mind distinct from the brain?

## **ASSESSMENT**

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Assessment is subject to the requirements, policies, and procedures of the Board.

One of the purposes of assessment is to measure the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes of a program based on this curriculum statement. The assessment tasks used to determine a student's Subject Achievement Score are summative. Formative tasks are important in the learning process, but do not contribute to final grades.

Assessment in Stage 2 Philosophy consists of the following components, weighted as shown:

Assessment Component 1: Argument Analysis (30%)

Assessment Component 2: Issues Analysis (40%)

Assessment Component 3: Philosophical Issues Study (30%).

The assessment specifications and the criteria for judging performance that are outlined on the following pages reflect the learning outcomes that each assessment component is designed to assess. The criteria for judging performance state the qualities or features that assessors will look for and are followed by questions that aim to clarify for the student precisely what is being assessed.

In most cases the clarifying questions will apply to the specific assessment task that students have undertaken. However, in some cases, particularly when students and teachers negotiate and design aspects of an assessment task, teachers may need to vary the clarifying questions.

It is important that students clearly understand the criteria for judging performance before they undertake an assessment task.

### **Student Research**

When conducting research, in both the school and the wider community, students must be aware that their actions have the potential to affect other people positively or negatively. In its policy on students as researchers, the SACE Board sets out its commitment to supporting students in ethical research. Students who are conducting research should follow the Guidelines on Conducting Ethical Research for the SACE. See the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)).

### **SACE Word-count Policy**

The SACE Word-count Policy states that all words used in the body of the text are counted for assessment purposes. This includes all words that the assessor reads, from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion.

The word-count includes:

- headings
- direct quotations
- in-text references
- footnotes that are used as explanatory notes.

The word-count does not include:

- the title/question page
- the contents page
- words in tables, flow charts, graphs, and diagrams
- the reference list or bibliography (including footnotes that are used as references)
- appendixes.

### **Assessment Component 1: Argument Analysis**

This assessment component is designed to assess primarily Learning Outcomes 2 and 4. It is weighted at 30%.

Students should apply their skills of argument analysis and identify the arguments of others by examining three different types of texts chosen from, for example, popular news programs, poetry, film, lyrics, interest group pronouncements and reports.

Methods of presentation could include debates, oral presentations, short written analyses, visual displays, and electronic presentations, or a combination of one or more of these.

#### **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in argument analysis will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

##### *knowledge*

- How well does the student explain how philosophers use reasoning and argument in relation to the philosophical position?
- How well does the student provide sufficient background to establish a context of reasoning and argument?

##### *skills of thinking*

- To what extent does the student select and use terminology appropriately and accurately?
- How effectively does the student select and apply the skills of philosophical enquiry?

##### *argument analysis*

- How well does the student apply philosophical terminology in analysing argument?
- How well does the student identify the parts of an argument?
- How well does the student analyse the structure of argument?

##### *communication*

- How effectively does the student choose a form and use it to communicate issues and positions?
- How clearly and fluently does the student communicate issues and positions?

### **Assessment Component 2: Issues Analysis**

This assessment component is designed to assess primarily Learning Outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 5. It is weighted at 40%.

At least one task for each of the key areas (ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics) must be included in the issues analysis. Students should 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;
- how they will communicate this position to others.

Teachers will need to negotiate with students the conditions in which this component is assessed. Methods of presentation could include role-plays, oral presentations, essays, scripted dialogues, multimedia presentations, letters to the editor, films, or videos.

### **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in the issues analysis will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

#### *application and analysis of knowledge*

- How well does the student identify and state philosophical issues and positions?
- How well does the student establish a range of different responses to the philosophical issue?

#### *skills of critical thinking*

- How well does the student identify, and critically analyse the formulation of, a philosophical position?
- How well does the student critically analyse the argument of others?
- How effectively does the student adopt and defend a philosophical position?

#### *communication*

- How effectively does the student choose a form and use it to communicate issues and positions?
- How clearly and fluently does the student communicate issues and positions?

### **Assessment Component 3: Philosophical Issues Study**

This assessment component is designed to assess all the learning outcomes. It is weighted at 30%.

This component will be externally marked by the SACE Board.

Students examine a philosophical issue from any of the key areas. They choose the issue in negotiation with their teacher. Students should:

- identify and explicate a philosophical issue;
- critically examine what philosophers have said about the issue.

The philosophical issues study is to be presented in written form but it need not be in essay format and could include dialogue or any other written genre. The study should be up to a maximum of 2000 words. (Refer to page 27 for information on the SACE Word-count Policy.)

### **Criteria for Judging Performance**

The student's performance in the philosophical issues study will be judged by the extent to which he or she demonstrates:

#### *application and analysis of knowledge*

- How well does the student identify and state philosophical issues and positions?
- How well does the student explain why the issue is a philosophical issue?
- How effectively does the student select and use terminology that is correct and appropriate to the argument?

#### *skills of critical thinking*

- How well does the student identify, and critically analyse the formulation of, a philosophical position?
- How well does the student critically analyse the argument of others?
- How effectively does the student adopt and defend a philosophical position?

#### *communication*

- How effectively does the student choose a form and use it to communicate the issue and positions?
- How clearly and fluently does the student communicate the issue and positions?

## **MODERATION**

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Moderation is subject to the requirements, policies, and procedures of the Board. The specific moderation requirements are published annually.

Moderation is a process undertaken to ensure that the school-assessed marks awarded to students who take a subject are comparable from school to school. The purpose of moderation is to help to ensure fairness to students and to provide the community with reliable information about student performance.

Assessment Component 1: Argument Analysis and Assessment Component 2: Issues Analysis will be centrally moderated. Assessment Component 3: Philosophical Issues Study will be externally marked.

## **SUPPORT MATERIALS**

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Useful support materials are available on the SACE Board website ([www.saceboard.sa.edu.au](http://www.saceboard.sa.edu.au)), for example:

- annotated work samples
- assessment exemplars
- assessment plans
- illustrative programs
- performance standards
- resources
- teaching and learning strategies.