PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

ATAR COURSE

Year 12 syllabus

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Content

Rationale

Philosophical thought shapes what people think, what they value, what they consider to be true, and how they engage with others and the world around them. It is one of the foundations of all academic disciplines. It seeks to shed light on questions, such as: what is real? What and how do we understand? How should we live? What is it to be human? And who am I? It deals with issues and problems that cannot be addressed adequately by appealing to experience and experiment alone. Philosophical inquiry requires that we question our assumptions, beliefs and our reasons for holding them. The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course aims to empower students to make independent judgements on the basis of reason.

Doing philosophy is a practical activity. We do philosophy, for example, when we seek to define something, when we challenge assumptions, when we construct an argument, and when we think about what we are doing, how we are doing it and to what ends. The study of philosophy gives us a set of skills that better enables us to understand, evaluate and engage with our world, whether that is our personal or our social world, our world of work or the wider questions of how the world works.

The relation between the disciplines of philosophy and ethics in this course requires some explanation. Traditionally, ethics has been regarded as a branch of philosophy (alongside metaphysics and epistemology), so that reference to philosophy will normally include reference to ethics. The title 'Philosophy and Ethics' signifies that ethics has particular importance in this course. This status recognises that every member of a society faces ethical issues. A philosophical approach helps people to reflect on, and better understand, difficult ethical issues.

In philosophy and ethics, disagreement is common. Methods of inquiry and the skills of critical reasoning help us deal more effectively with disagreement. This course places considerable emphasis on students contributing constructively to a philosophical Community of Inquiry.

A philosophical Community of Inquiry at its simplest is a collaborative and cooperative process through which students learn with others, and from others, how to engage in philosophical discourse. Such discourse seeks to clarify, analyse, evaluate and define concepts and issues so as to help students understand and deal with complex questions raised by popular culture, by contemporary events and by the history of ideas. A philosophical Community of Inquiry uses the skills of critical reasoning to assist in dealing more effectively and tolerantly with disagreement.

Employers are increasingly searching for people who can analyse new situations and devise and evaluate appropriate strategies to manage them. The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course develops thinking skills and moral discernment that students apply to a range of practical situations in their personal, social and working lives. The course is relevant to students focusing on the study of philosophy at university. It is of equal value to those following career paths that require the evaluation of arguments, such as law, or those needing to make complex judgements, such as in medical, pastoral or other human service occupations. The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course is also relevant to those entering careers involving aesthetics, such as advertising and design.

Course outcomes

The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course is designed to facilitate achievement of the following outcomes.

Outcome 1 – Philosophical and ethical inquiry

Students use investigative methods to think and argue philosophically.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- participate in open philosophical communities of inquiry
- explore philosophical and ethical concepts, ideas and ideals
- use critical reasoning methods to recognise, analyse, evaluate and develop arguments.

Outcome 2 – Philosophical and ethical perspectives

Students understand that there are philosophical and ethical approaches to making meaning.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand that there are different ways of knowing
- understand that there are different viewpoints on the nature of reality
- understand that people need to give good reasons for how they live.

Outcome 3 – Philosophy and ethics in human affairs

Students understand that philosophical and ethical thinking has a role in human affairs.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- understand that there are philosophical traditions
- understand that there are different world views
- understand the influence of philosophical ideas on contemporary culture.

Outcome 4 – Applying and relating philosophical and ethical understandings

Students reflect on, evaluate and respond to a range of human issues by selecting from a repertoire of philosophical and ethical strategies.

In achieving this outcome, students:

- evaluate different ways of knowing about a range of practical issues
- reflect on understandings of the nature of reality and human nature and their relationship to practical issues and situations
- use philosophical and ethical reasoning to respond critically to aspects of human activity.

Organisation

This course is organised into a Year 11 syllabus and a Year 12 syllabus. The cognitive complexity of the syllabus content increases from Year 11 to Year 12.

Structure of the syllabus

The Year 12 syllabus is divided into two units which are delivered as a pair. The notional time for the pair of units is 110 class contact hours.

Unit 3 – Reason and society

Students examine the mapping of arguments; humanism, religion and values; individualism and social identity; the ideals of a good society; and the ideals of politics and government.

Unit 4 – Reason and meaning

Students examine complex arguments; a number of higher-order systems of inquiry; ways of understanding the relationship between religion and science; and ethical issues of life and death.

Each unit includes:

• a unit description – a short description of the focus of the unit

• unit content – the content to be taught and learned.

Organisation of content

The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course develops student learning through three content areas:

• How do we know?

• What is real?

• How do we live?

Representation of the general capabilities

The general capabilities encompass the knowledge, skills, behaviours and dispositions that will assist students to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the capabilities into the teaching and learning program for the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course. The general capabilities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Literacy

While much of the explicit teaching of literacy occurs in the English learning area, it is strengthened, made specific and extended in Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course, where students are routinely required to communicate ideas and arguments of varying levels of complexity using both oral and written media. They must generate responses that clarify, analyse and evaluate verbal and written arguments using both conventional written structures and the Community of Inquiry.

Numeracy

Using mathematical skills across the curriculum both enriches the study of other learning areas and contributes to the development of a broader and deeper understanding of numeracy. In the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course, students number arguments in terms of their constituent components and map them diagrammatically. Students are also required to identify examples of deductive reasoning by cross referencing particular argument structures with logical formulae, to determine their respective validity.

Information and communication technology capability

The information and communication technology (ICT) capability supports and enhances student learning across all areas of the curriculum. In the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course, students are encouraged to further their skills through the routine deployment of ICT during research investigations, creating presentations, and using blog and online discussion forums. They are also challenged to be critical and responsible consumers of technology and digital media. The Ethics component of the course particularly promotes reflection and discussion about whether technology, in all its different permutations, can be considered to be a public good and whether it has the potential to be a utopian or dystopian feature, depending on the context.

Critical and creative thinking

Activities that foster critical and creative thinking should include both independent and collaborative tasks, and entail some sort of transition or tension between ways of thinking. In the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course, students are presented with a problem and are challenged to progress their own thinking and understanding (and that of their peers), using the Socratic method. The Community of Inquiry is the central platform for philosophical and ethical exchange, where students have license to be critical of each other's ideas providing their critiques are sustainable and can augment community understanding of a topic.

Personal and social capability

Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate explicit teaching of the personal and social capability depending on their choice of learning activities. The Community of Inquiry invites the focus of inquiry to be directed by student generated questions, which in turn reflect the interests of the students.

Ethical understanding

Ethical issues arise across all areas of the curriculum, with each learning area containing a range of content that demands consideration from an ethical perspective. Ethical dilemmas, hypothetical thought experiments, and real life scenarios all set a context for discussion within the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course. Students consider, analyse and evaluate a range of ethical decision-making models, structures of justice and fairness, systems of government, social contract theories, and secular and religious world views. They are challenged to apply particular ethical theories to real-life situations and to evaluate their potential merit and relevance.

Intercultural understanding

Although intercultural understanding focuses primarily on the development of skills, behaviours and dispositions, it also draws on students' growing knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of their own and others' cultural perspectives and practices derived from learning area content. In the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course, students are required to draw extensively on the thinking of Ancient civilisations; on both Analytic and Continental traditions and on contemporary schools of thought representing different cultural and epistemological interests and influences. They are exposed to and asked to make sense of global 'expert' opinions and are challenged to systematically deconstruct and reinterpret these in the context of their own social, historical, cultural, economic and geographic experiences.

Representation of the cross-curriculum priorities

The cross-curriculum priorities address the contemporary issues which students face in a globalised world. Teachers may find opportunities to incorporate the priorities into the teaching and learning program for the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course. The cross-curriculum priorities are not assessed unless they are identified within the specified unit content.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world's oldest continuous living cultures. Discussions in the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course that will naturally lead into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and contemporary perspectives may typically include concepts of: justice, fairness, liberty, equality, rights and tolerance; ideas of social identity and of common good; moral concepts in different cultures; ideas about social responsibility and obligations to the individual, society, citizenship and civic involvement; and ethical issues of life and death.

Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia

An understanding of Asia underpins the capacity of Australian students to be active and informed citizens working together to build harmonious local, regional and global communities, and build Australia's social, intellectual and creative capital. It also builds understanding of the diversity of cultures and peoples living in Australia, fosters social inclusion and cohesion and is vital to the prosperity of Australia. There are many opportunities for students to consider Asian perspectives within the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course.

Sustainability

Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence. The Philosophy and Ethics ATAR course includes obligations to the human and the non-human world, social planning, and public goods.

Unit 3 – Reason and society

Unit description

This unit enables students to examine the mapping of arguments; humanism, religion and values; individualism and social identity; the ideals of a good society; and the ideals of politics and government.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below. This is the examinable content.

How do we know?

Critical reasoning

- numbering propositions, bracketing premises, circling inference indicators and underlining conclusions in arguments written in natural language

- mapping simple arguments in diagram form – single inferential moves that are either a serial, convergent, divergent or linked inference

- evaluating simple arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency

- exploring more informal fallacies, including appeal to adverse consequences, false dichotomy, begging the question, ad populum and straw man argument

- identifying weasel words – intentionally ambiguous words, phrases or statements which demonstrate vagueness, ambiguity or euphemism

Methods of inquiry

- the scientific method, including falsification, the role of thought-experiment, deduction, induction and the problem of induction

- the method of sceptical doubt in philosophical inquiry

- the concept of phenomenology – reflection on the structure and meaning of conscious experience

Imagination and interpretation

- the idea of a good society

- the concepts of utopia and dystopia in works of imagination

Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts

- the concepts of justice, fairness, liberty, equality, rights and tolerance

- criteria for a good society

- the idea of the common good, and of public good

What is real?

Scientific world view

- various relationships between science and society, including the assumption that the scientific method is the dominant paradigm for knowing and understanding reality

- the applicability of scientific studies for understanding human beings and their societies

Conceptions of ultimate reality

- the concepts of humanism, secular society, religion and ultimate values

Persons

- the ideas of social identity and social membership

- the relationship between social conformity and the idea of individualism

- the concept of marginalisation

How should we live?

Governance

- the idea of a social contract and its forms

- the concept of liberal democracy and its forms

- the concepts of socialism, liberalism and libertarianism

- the values of liberal democracy

- the concepts of social policy, social planning and public goods

Communities and cultures

- the idea that different cultures have different moral points of view

Self and others

- moral theories in ethical decision making, including utilitarianism and deontology

- the idea of social responsibility

- obligations to those in my society and to those outside my society

- obligations to the human world, including future generations

- obligations to the non-human world, including environmental ethics and animal rights

Unit 4 – Reason and meaning

Unit description

This unit enables students to examine complex arguments; a number of higher-order systems of inquiry; ways of understanding the relationship between religion and science; and ethical issues of life and death.

Unit content

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below. This is the examinable content.

How do we know?

Critical reasoning

- mapping complex arguments in diagram form: 3–5 premises; 2–3 inferential moves; a combination of serial, linked and/or convergent and divergent inferences written in natural language

- evaluating complex arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency

- identifying, combining and rewriting difficult propositions in arguments commensurate to their function as premises and conclusions

- the role of complex sentences, conditionals and connectives in argument – if/then; and; but; or

- exploring more fallacies, including the definist fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc, non sequitur, slippery slope fallacy and confusion of correlation and causation

- distinguishing between analytic and synthetic statements

Methods of inquiry

- theories of knowledge, including empiricism, rationalism, and intuitionism

- types of inquiry: existentialism

Imagination and interpretation

- religion as an interpretation of religious and mystical experiences

- the comparison between religious experience and scientific 'experience'

- the possibility of misinterpretation with regard to religion and scientific methodologies

Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts

- the concept of theism

- ideas of the divine

- the concepts of naturalism, materialism, atheism and agnosticism

What is real?

Scientific world view

- the relationship between evolution and religion
- Darwin's theory of evolution as an example of scientific theorising

Conceptions of ultimate reality

- religious and non-religious ideas of the meaning of life
- ideas of death and the meaning of life
- theism and the problem of evil

Persons

- the ideas of faith, belief, knowledge, reason and meaning, and their interrelationships
- the concept of authenticity

How should we live?

Governance

- the concepts of citizenship, civic involvement, the public sphere and meaningful lives

Communities and cultures

- the absolutist claim that moral standards, values and rules apply in all cultures
- the relativist claim that moral standards, values and rules are right for one culture, but not another

Self and others

- ethical issues of life and death – murder, manslaughter, killing in war, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and the killing of animals

School-based assessment

The *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual* contains essential information on principles, policies and procedures for school-based assessment that needs to be read in conjunction with this syllabus.

Teachers design school-based assessment tasks to meet the needs of students. The table below provides details of the assessment types for the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR Year 12 syllabus and the weighting for each assessment type.

Assessment table – Year 12

Type of assessment	Weighting
Critical reasoning Typically these are short answer questions which require students to demonstrate skills in critical reasoning and methods of inquiry. All questions, items, example arguments and instructions are written in natural language. At least two critical reasoning tasks must be administered under test conditions.	20%
Philosophical analysis and evaluation Typically these are extended answers which require students to summarise, clarify, and critically evaluate the cogency of arguments put forward in dialogues and texts. This typically involves making judgements about inferential strength, the acceptability of premises and relevance of examples used to support claims. Two types of philosophical analysis and evaluation of arguments are used in this course. Tasks are based on either • a Community of Inquiry dialogue between two contributors OR • an article/extract dealing with any combination of ethical, epistemological and/or metaphysical topics/themes or issues. At least one of each type of philosophical analysis and evaluation task must be administered under test conditions.	20%
Construction of argument Typically this is an extended writing format, such as an essay, which requires students to: define terms and concepts, put forward a premise or thesis, employ examples and counter-examples, justify the development of the argument, avoid contradiction, synthesise contrary claims and establish a conclusion that follows from the premise and the examples. This process uses/applies the elements of arguments developed in critical reasoning and philosophical analysis and evaluation. At least two construction of argument tasks must be administered under test conditions.	20%
Examination Typically conducted at the end of each semester and/or unit and reflecting the examination design brief for this syllabus.	40%

Teachers are required to use the assessment table to develop an assessment outline for the pair of units.

The assessment outline must:

• include a set of assessment tasks

• include a general description of each task

• indicate the unit content to be assessed

- indicate a weighting for each task and each assessment type

- include the approximate timing of each task (for example, the week the task is conducted, or the issue and submission dates for an extended task).

In the assessment outline for the pair of units, each assessment type must be included at least twice.

The set of assessment tasks must provide a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Assessment tasks not administered under test/controlled conditions require appropriate validation/authentication processes.

Grading

Schools report student achievement in terms of the following grades:

Grade	Interpretation
A	Excellent achievement
B	High achievement
C	Satisfactory achievement
D	Limited achievement
E	Very low achievement

The teacher prepares a ranked list and assigns the student a grade for the pair of units. The grade is based on the student's overall performance as judged by reference to a set of pre-determined standards. These standards are defined by grade descriptions and annotated work samples. The grade descriptions for the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR Year 12 syllabus are provided in Appendix 1. They can also be accessed, together with annotated work samples, through the Guide to Grades link on the course page of the Authority website at www.scsa.wa.edu.au.

To be assigned a grade, a student must have had the opportunity to complete the education program, including the assessment program (unless the school accepts that there are exceptional and justifiable circumstances).

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information about the use of a ranked list in the process of assigning grades.

ATAR course examination

All students enrolled in the Philosophy and Ethics ATAR Year 12 course are required to sit the ATAR course examination. The examination is based on a representative sampling of the content for Unit 3 and Unit 4.

Details of the ATAR course examination for this course are prescribed in the ATAR course examination design brief on the following page.

Refer to the *WACE Manual* for further information.

Examination design brief – Year 12

Time allowed

Reading time before commencing work: ten minutes

Working time for paper: three hours

Permissible items

Standard items: pens (blue/black preferred), pencils (including coloured), sharpener, correction fluid/tape, eraser, ruler, highlighters

Special items: nil

Section	Supporting information
Section One **Critical reasoning** 30% of the total examination 8–10 short answer questions Suggested working time: 50 minutes	Questions assess skills in critical reasoning and methods of inquiry. All questions and instructions are written in natural language.
Section Two **Philosophical analysis and evaluation** **Part A** 20% of the total examination One extended answer question Suggested working time: 40 minutes **Part B** 20% of the total examination One extended answer question Suggested working time: 40 minutes	The extended answer questions assess the candidate's ability to summarise, clarify and critically evaluate the cogency of arguments and assumptions in dialogues and texts. In Part A, the candidate is required to evaluate an extract of philosophical dialogue in light of criteria drawn from the Community of Inquiry. In Part B, the candidate is required to respond to one of three passages (article or extract) which can deal with any combination of ethical, epistemological and/or metaphysical topics, themes or issues.
Section Three **Construction of argument** 30% of the total examination One question from a choice of five Suggested working time: 50 minutes	The extended answer or essay question assesses the candidate's ability to structure an argument. The candidate is required to define their terms or concepts, put forward a premise or thesis, employ examples and counter-examples, justify the development of the argument, avoid contradiction, synthesise contrary claims and establish a conclusion that follows from the premise and the examples. The question requires the candidate to argue for or against a statement demonstrating philosophical understandings, philosophical argument, and clarity and structure.

Appendix 1 – Grade descriptions Year 12

A	**Critical reasoning** Brackets premises, numbers propositions in order of appearance, circles all inference indicators, underlines conclusions and accurately maps simple and complex arguments in diagram form. Rewrites accurately and formally the separable statements in an argument. Assesses cogency from statement acceptability and inferential strength accurately. Assesses and explains with reference to definitions why an argument contains a fallacy. **Philosophical analysis and evaluation** Identifies the topic and main conclusion and explains the philosophical context in which an argument is placed. Discusses acceptability of statements using illustrative examples to evaluate claims. Evaluates the cogency of arguments using critical support from statement acceptability and inferential strength. **Construction of argument** Uses philosophical topics, quotes, concepts and well-known arguments in a sophisticated manner to provide cogent support for a position. Considers objections to their position and clarifies or corrects thinking using relevant examples and/or counter-examples. Writes with structure and clarity, and shows originality.
B	**Critical reasoning** Brackets most premises, numbers most propositions in order of appearance, circles most inference indicators, underlines most conclusions and maps simple and most complex arguments. Rewrites most separable statements with some knowledge of conditionals and connectives. Assesses the acceptability of most statements and the strength of most inferential moves correctly, making accurate evaluations of cogency most of the time. Identifies a fallacy in an argument with some reference to its name and/or definition. **Philosophical analysis and evaluation** Identifies the topic and the main conclusion and states the philosophical context in which an argument is placed. Explains the acceptability of statements using appropriate examples to evaluate claims. Evaluates the cogency of most arguments with support from statement acceptability and inferential strength. **Construction of argument** Refers to philosophical topics, quotes, concepts and well-known arguments in the tradition to provide cogent support for a position. Compares ideas with one another, using examples and counter-examples to clarify and correct thinking. Writes with structure and displays some complexity of thought.

	Critical reasoning
C	Brackets most premises, numbers most propositions in order of appearance, circles most inference indicators, underlines most conclusions and maps most simple and some complex arguments. Combines separable statements often, demonstrating little understanding of conditionals and connectives. Explains the acceptability of most statements and correctly assesses some inferential moves in an attempt to evaluate cogency. Identifies and labels most fallacies using some correct terminology.
	Philosophical analysis and evaluation Identifies the topic or the main conclusion of an argument with limited reference to the philosophical context. States the acceptability of statements using general examples to evaluate claims. Explains the cogency of an argument with some reference to its premises and inferences.
	Construction of argument Makes generalised claims about philosophical topics, quotes, concepts and well-known arguments, which results in moderately cogent support for a position. Compares some ideas with one another, using examples and counter-examples to clarify thinking. Writes with some structure and purpose but displays ambiguity of thought in places.

	Critical reasoning
D	Struggles to bracket statements, often fails to number propositions in order of appearance, circles some inference indicators and underlines incorrect statements as conclusions. Maps arguments incorrectly. Rewrites sentences verbatim without separating statements and/or replacing pronouns with their antecedents. Asserts the acceptability of statements and the strength of inferential moves in an attempt to evaluate cogency. Confuses fallacies either in terms of terminology or definition.
	Philosophical analysis and evaluation Identifies either the topic or a conclusion in an argument without reference to philosophical context. Commits the fallacy of the straw man when analysing and evaluating arguments. Asserts the cogency of an argument with limited or no reference to premises and inferences.
	Construction of argument Makes assertions about philosophical topics and/or concepts and/or quotes and/or well-known arguments in the tradition. Makes no connections between ideas and/or concepts and fails to establish a philosophical perspective. Constructs weak arguments that make few relevant claims and/or commit serious errors of reasoning.

E	Does not meet the requirements of a D grade and/or has completed insufficient assessment tasks to be assigned a higher grade.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

This glossary is provided to enable a common understanding of the key terms in this syllabus.

Consilience
The concept that knowledge exists in an orderly and unified interdisciplinary state, and that all interpretations and conclusions in any inquiry should be a part of that orderliness and unity.

Dialectic
1. A Socratic conversation or dialogue in which contradictory claims about basic beliefs or first principles are analysed and evaluated, with the stronger claim judged as the best way to proceed in an inquiry [from Plato].

2. A process of resolving logically opposite yet equally compelling claims about an idea or concept so that such claims exist no longer in dichotomy but as synthesised knowledge [from Hegel].

Dialogue
The use of conversation as philosophical inquiry by extending obligations and rights to the participants, for example, the Community of Inquiry.

Hermeneutics
The philosophical study of interpretation and meaning that involves considering others' perspectives beside our own, as well as the relationship between the part and the whole in text and context.

Marginalisation
The state of being outside or on the edge of mainstream society and culture in unjust conditions as a direct result of mainstream social and cultural attitudes or prejudices, for example, living on the margin.

Phenomenology
The philosophical study of conscious experiences in order to reveal the forces, whether natural or spiritual, human or non-human, that drive the phenomena and so make up the essential elements of the experience, both in its subjective and objective sense.

Weasel words, phrases or statements
Words, phrases or statements that demonstrate ambiguity, vagueness and euphemism.