

Options with philosophy

Your skills

Employers of graduates in the UK are interested in your understanding of the skills developed through your degree and how you link these to the requirements of the jobs. Although philosophy is generally considered to be a non-vocational degree, many employers value the specific skills that the study of philosophy develops.

The study of philosophy helps you to develop the ability to:

- analyse and construct sound arguments;
- think logically and critically about ideas and issues;
- distinguish fine differences between views and find common ground;
- present ideas convincingly through well-constructed, systematic arguments;
- write clearly and persuasively;
- generate ideas and come up with solutions to problems;
- be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking.

In addition, you gain many other general skills sought after by a range of employers. These skills include: independent study and self-motivation; clear communication; the ability to prioritise work and meet deadlines; flexibility; creativity; the ability to identify, absorb and sift complex information; teamwork; good presentation skills; and increased skill with information technology.

The Employability Guide, available on the Higher Education Academy - Philosophical and Religious Studies (<http://www.prs.heacademy.ac.uk/publications/>) website, has more information on the skills gained through the study of philosophy.

Consider the skills developed on your course as well as through your other activities, such as paid work, volunteering, family responsibilities, sport, membership of societies, leadership roles, etc. Think about how these can be used as evidence of your skills and personal attributes. Then you can start to market and sell who you *really* are, identify what you may be lacking and consider how to improve your profile. Take a look at [applications, CVs and interviews](#) for some useful tips.

Job options

Jobs directly related to your degree

Apart from teaching philosophy at secondary level or in further or higher education (see [Secondary school teacher](#), [Further education lecturer](#) and [Higher education lecturer](#)), there are no jobs where philosophy is an essential requirement. However, the skills gained from the study of philosophy are in demand by graduate employers in a range of jobs and sectors.

Jobs where your degree would be useful

- [Advertising account planner](#) - works for an advertising agency serving external clients. A specialist in understanding the attitudes, interests and consumer behaviours of key client groups.
- [Barrister](#) - specialist in advocacy, presenting cases in court under instruction from a solicitor.
- [Civil Service fast streamer](#) - works in a series of responsible roles as policy adviser, project leader, consultant or researcher to support the work of government, rotating around several of the government departments or agencies.
- [Health Service manager](#) - takes a managerial role within the National Health Service, hospitals and trusts; strategic health authorities; primary care services; and community

health services.

- [Investment analyst](#) - undertakes research to provide ideas and information which will enable fund managers to make decisions relating to the investment portfolios that they manage.
- [Newspaper journalist](#) - finds, researches and writes stories for publication in local, regional and national press.
- [Psychotherapist](#) - works with individuals, couples or families, to explore their thought processes, feelings and behaviour. Helps clients find new ways to deal with, and alleviate, their distress.
- [Recruitment consultant](#) - responsible for helping employer clients to recruit staff for job vacancies. They develop an understanding of their client's requirements, identify potential staff by assessing candidates' skills through interviews, tests and background checks, then make recommendations to their client.
- [Software engineer](#) - designs, tests, implements and maintains software programs and systems to meet client or employer needs, often as part of a team.
- [Commercial solicitor/Non-commercial solicitor](#) - commercial solicitors advise and act for businesses. Non-commercial solicitors represent clients and give advice on areas of law such as property, tax, employment, finance, intellectual property or competition law.
- [Stockbroker](#) - invests in securities, money and other financial products on behalf of institutional, corporate and private clients. Also makes recommendations based on interpretation of financial market information.

Most of the jobs above require further qualifications, training or experience.

Although some of the jobs listed here might not be first jobs for many graduates, they are among the many realistic possibilities with your degree, provided you can demonstrate you have the attributes employers are looking for. Bear in mind that it's not just your degree discipline that determines your options. Remember that many graduate vacancies don't specify particular degree disciplines, so don't restrict your thinking to the jobs listed here. Look at [your degree... what next?](#) for informed advice on career planning and graduate employment, or take a look at [what jobs would suit me?](#), a helpful starting point for self-analysis.

[Explore types of jobs](#) to find out more about the above options and related jobs.

Career areas

In 2008, six months after graduating, over half of philosophy graduates were in some type of paid employment. Areas of work employing large numbers were business and finance (12%); commercial, industrial and the public sector management (10%); and marketing, sales and advertising (8%).

At this stage almost one third of those in employment were found in either clerical and secretarial or retail, catering and bar jobs. However, it is unlikely that this pattern will be representative of the long-term destinations of philosophy graduates as, like many arts and humanities graduates, they will often take longer to make career decisions.

Where are the jobs?

Philosophy graduates are found working with almost every type of employer in the public, private and not-for-profit sector. Typical employers include:

- the National Health Service;

- civil service;
- advertising agencies;
- investment banks;
- law firms;
- charities;
- publishing firms;
- recruitment agencies.

For more information on some of the career areas entered by philosophy graduates, see:

- [Legal services](#) - includes work in the court system, firms of solicitors, barristers' chambers (advocates' stables in Scotland), private companies and central and local government;
- [Government and public administration](#) - incorporating a huge range of opportunities within the civil service and local government;
- [Banking, investment and insurance](#) - includes the activities of banks and investment banks and markets, as well as roles in insurance.

See [industry insights](#) for further information on possibilities in other employment areas.

Statistics are collected every year by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) (<http://www.hesa.ac.uk>) to show what HE students do immediately after graduation. These can be a useful guide but, in reality, with the data being collected within just six months of graduation, many graduates are travelling, waiting to start a course, paying off debts, getting work experience or still deciding what they want to do. For further information about some of the areas of employment commonly entered by graduates of any degree discipline, check out [what do graduates do?](#) and [your degree...what next?](#)

Further study

In 2008, six months after graduation, over 20% of philosophy graduates had gone on to full-time postgraduate study, and a further 8% were combining study with work, either to pursue an interest or to gain an essential qualification for a specific career area.

For some career areas, such as law, lecturing and teaching, a further qualification is essential. For other careers a postgraduate qualification may be useful but it is relevant work experience that is essential, for example in journalism and advertising. To decide if further study is necessary you should research the career areas that interest you.

Many philosophy graduates continue with in-depth study of their discipline, possibly with the intention of pursuing a career as a lecturer but often due purely to their interest in philosophy. Other graduates have chosen to study something vocational at postgraduate level - common areas for philosophy graduates have included law, publishing and journalism.

These trends show only what previous graduates in your subject did immediately upon graduating. Over the course of their career - the first few years in particular - many others will opt for some form of further study, either part time or full time. If further study interests you, start by thinking [about postgrad study](#). [Find courses and research](#) of interest to you; you can also [apply for courses online](#).

Look at [funding my further study](#) for details relating to finance and the application process.

What next?

This should have started you thinking about your future. Whether you are in the early stages of career planning, or you have definite ideas about what you want to do, you will find further information to help you in the following sections:

- Analyse your skills, interests and motivations to find out [what jobs would suit me?](#)
- [Explore types of jobs](#) to find out about entry requirements, salaries and working conditions.

- See [industry insights](#) for hints on breaking into various industries.
- [Find graduate employers](#) and see what they have to offer.
- You may want to investigate [self-employment](#) or [flexible working](#).
- Look at the advice on [applications, CVs and interviews](#).
- Get [work experience](#) through vacation work or a work placement.
- [Find courses and research](#) and investigate postgraduate study opportunities.
- If you are thinking about taking time out, volunteering or travelling consider a [gap year](#) or explore [working and studying abroad](#).
- If you have already graduated, get online [interactive advice](#).
- Visit [your university careers service](#) for a wealth of advice and resources to help with your career planning.

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Last updated by Carol Rowe, AGCAS, December 2008.

The work of writers and editors is gratefully acknowledged.

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