CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY

WHY DO SKILLS MATTER?

- As stated by the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series: *"The pace of innovation and automation sweeping through our workplaces has prompted thought leaders and policy makers to argue that young people need more enterprise skills (often called generic, 21st century or transferable skills) that can be used across multiple roles and occupations."*

- And: *Recently, the OECD argued that "the increased rate of innovation across economies requires the workforce to possess both technical competence and 'generic skills' – problem solving, creativity, team work and communication skills."*

- As stated in the Deloitte's "The Value of the Humanities" report: *"Employers, both in the public and private sector, have increasingly concerned themselves with the 'organisational fit' of candidates. This shift has been accelerated as businesses evolve into increasingly complex organisations with multiple business units and product portfolios. Communication, problem-solving, collaboration and critical thinking...technologies may be ever changing but these transferrable skills will always be in demand."* - Susan Carter, Learning, Leadership & Development Head, Siemens Ltd.

HOW DO WE DEFINE CORE SKILLS IN PHILOSOPHY?

The following infographics highlight five vitally important skills gained through studying philosophy. Although there is crossover between them, they each consist of distinct features. We have defined them as follows:

Communication Skills:

- The ability to structure and organise the expression of ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in verbal and written contexts.

Critical Thinking:

- The ability to analyse and evaluate arguments and ideas objectively, based on logic and proper evidence.

Interpretive Analytical Skills:

- The ability to understand the key message from a larger set of information and then respond appropriately, whether this be in carrying out a task in the most appropriate way, or evaluating ideas through recognising and evaluating assumptions, reasons, implications, and so on.

Problem Solving:

- The ability to recognise and understand problems, and devise the best strategies to solve them.

Generic Skills:

- Numerous additional transferable skills which can be hard to isolate or measure, but are nonetheless important. Specific examples include: leadership, creativty, cooperation, independence, charitability, multidisciplinary ability, etc.

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CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY: COMMUNICATION

WHAT DO ACADEMICS SAY?

- As stated in the 2010 AAP Forward Thinking report:
  "Philosophers value the clear, precise expression of complex ideas—whether verbally or in writing—and Philosophy departments/programs strive to teach the relevant skills... one particular form of communication is the essay. In learning and teaching Philosophy considerable emphasis is placed on essay writing. The skills needed in essay writing are obviously of value in the university context, but they readily transfer to the employment context in the writing of reports and proposals."

- For John Rudisill, philosophy students learn to:
  "develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in writing and discussion."

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY?

- A 2017 report conducted in Australia by Deloitte access economics found that employers listed communication as the most demanded skill for employment, and simultaneously the skill with the highest skill-gap.

- A 2015 survey of 1,378 employers by the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand found that employers ranked verbal communication as the second most important skill that they were looking for, and written communication as the eighth most important.

- According to the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series, there was a 12% increase in jobs requesting communication skills between 2012 and 2015, with an even higher increase for many other communication-related skills, termed as 'interaction skills', such as a 16% increase in telephone skills, a 21% increase in writing skills, and a 47% increase in listening skills.

WHAT DO GRADUATES SAY?

- Cynthia Townley completed a PhD from the University of Tasmania. Her work has included policy analysis and advocacy for the Tasmanian Council of Social Service. According to her:
  "Being able to communicate clearly with a range of people (is a big part of my job). Recognising and being comfortable with 'reasonable disagreement' is very useful, as is being able to identify the areas of common ground as well as those of divergence. Philosophical training helps you to structure a line of argument – reasons that will help someone understand what supports the position you are advocating for."

- Giles Cox studied philosophy at honours level at the University of Auckland. His career has included working in a strategy team of a major healthcare company. According to him:
  "Success requires employing sound deductive and inductive logic to reach the correct decisions, then bringing others on-board through effectively communicating my reasoning to stakeholders. Although I continue to refine these skills in my professional life, their foundations were developed during my philosophical studies."

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CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY: CRITICAL THINKING

WHAT DO ACADEMICS SAY?

- As stated in the 2010 AAP Forward Thinking report:
  "Since its inception, Philosophy has placed great emphasis on supporting the views being advanced with good reasons and sound argument. Both critical reasoning and logic are core parts of a Philosophy education. The ability to think critically and logically is of great value in all aspects of life, including university study and employment."

- For the APA thinking critically is essential to philosophy. They say:
  "A central component of active learning is learning how to challenge texts and their authors, not to see them as unquestionable authorities, but as meriting further clarification, interpretation, critical challenge, and development. In teaching students to adopt attitudes of benign skepticism and puzzlement, philosophy courses teach students to become more active and independent inquirers."

WHAT DO GRADUATES SAY?

- Adam John Andreotta completed a PhD in philosophy at the University of Western Australia. His career has included work as a document and compliance specialist in a technology start-up company. According to him:
  "The critical thinking skills I acquired by doing philosophy are obviously very helpful in the problem-solving tasks I perform every day. Whether I am writing procedures, creating online systems for the company, or discussing the aims of the company, it is helpful to have a background in critical and logical thinking."

- Darryl Betts completed a BA in philosophy, logic and computation from the University of Auckland. His career has included being a co-owner of a company that makes software products for telecommunications companies, ISPs and utility companies. For him:
  "Some level of training and critical thinking and logic should be compulsory at university. I can't think of any subject or vocation that you could do that wouldn't benefit from better thinking skills."

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY?

- Deloitte's 2017 access economics report found that critical thinking was among the top five most demanded skills by employers.

- A 2015 survey of 1,378 employers by the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand found that employers ranked analytical and critical thinking as the fourth most important skill that they were looking for.

- According to the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series, employers in Australia pay on average $7745 more per annum for jobs which require problem solving and critical thinking.

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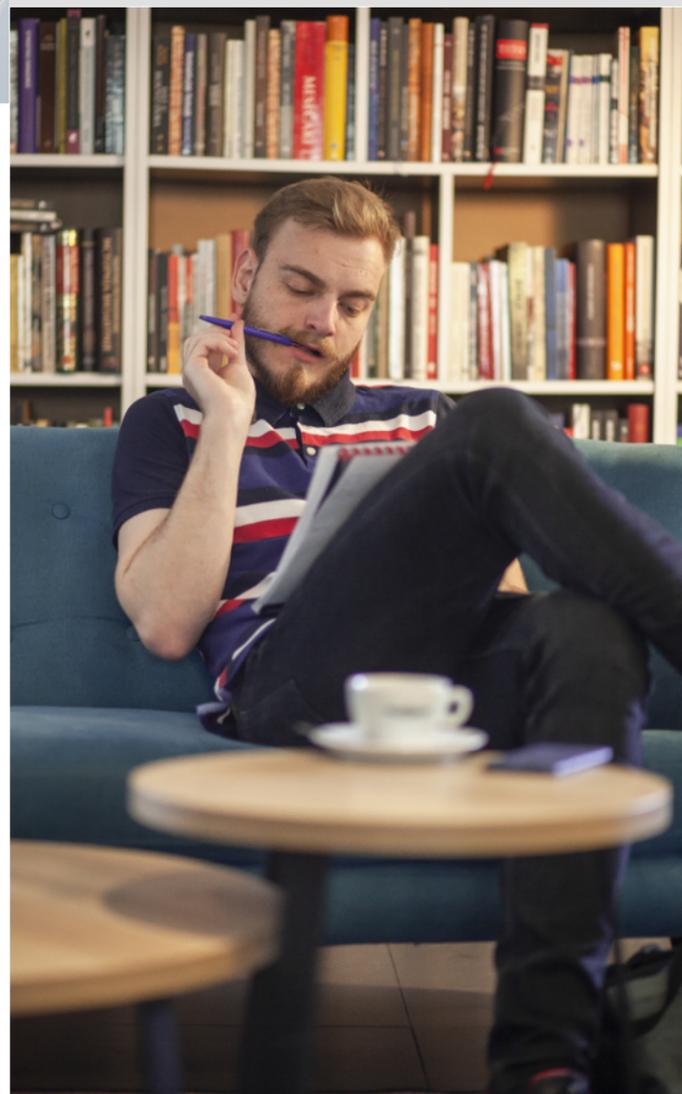
CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY: <u>INTERPRETIVE</u> ANALYTICAL SKILLS

WHAT DO ACADEMICS SAY?

- As stated in the 2010 AAP Forward Thinking report:
  "Philosophy students are taught to read carefully and critically. What is the author actually saying? What are the conceptual assumptions underpinning her claims? What evidence does she advance in support of her views? Is there counterevidence that the author has ignored? Critical reading is a crucial skill, not only for university students but also for citizens of advanced democracies such as Australia."

- For John Rudisill:
  "A (philosophy) student... must be able to identify and describe the main (philosophical) aims of an interlocutor (or text). She must also, on her own and respectful of the principle of charity in interpretation, be able to identify the strategy and main assumptions of a thinker or text. In the process, the student who does philosophy demonstrates a keen ability to both pick out of a text key terms (those playing a crucial role in the argument of the text) for critical analysis and also perform that critical analysis."

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY?

- According to the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series, the growth rate in the proportion of jobs requesting analytical skills increased by 15% from 2012-2015.

- According to the AAP Forward Thinking Report, 2010:
  "In recent years, labour market shifts have revealed an unexpected new interest by employers in the skills of philosophy students. In the UK there are reports that philosophy graduates are able to earn higher salaries because of the perception that their skills in reasoning and the analysis of complex problems, and their ability to adapt reasoning to new information, make them better able to adapt to changing economic, regulatory and fiscal conditions (Shepherd 2007). There are similar reports from Canada (Drolet 2008), the USA and Australia (Gilling 2008)."

WHAT DO GRADUATES SAY?

- Emma Martin completed a PhD in philosophy at Manchester University. Her career has involved working as an advisor on public sector transformation programs. For her:
  "I think studying analytic philosophy in particular made me acutely aware of language and meaning, of when people appear to agree but are actually talking at cross purposes, or conversely when they appear to disagree but have a common set of underlying goals."

- Mitch Parsell completed a PhD in philosophy at the University of Tasmania. His work has involved being the Associate Dean of Learning and Teaching for the Faculty of Human Sciences at Macquarie University. For him:
  "My philosophical training has given me the analytic skills to assess and synthesis this diverse and often divergent literature. It has provided me with argumentative skills to defend a position against criticism, often in highly emotion and high-stakes settings... it allows me to be constantly on guard against assumptions, often my own, about the way things must be."

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CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY: PROBLEM SOLVING

WHAT DO ACADEMICS SAY?

- For Dirk Baltzly, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania:
  "The methods you learn by studying Philosophy also happen to equip you with the skills employers say that they value above all others: communication and problem-solving skills."

- According to the University of Western Australia:
  "(Philosophy is) a method of critical inquiry that teaches you how to question assumptions, how to distinguish between credible and false arguments, and how to examine evidence to find creative solutions to complex problems. Our students develop analytical skills that are highly sought after in the public and private sectors, where the need for creative thinkers, superior problem-solving skills and analytical abilities is at an all-time high."

WHAT DO GRADUATES SAY?

- Rosslyn Brooks studied philosophy at Sydney University. Her works has included being a general practitioner. For her:
  "Philosophy provides tools to deal with ethically and emotionally charged discussions and decision making with clients. Disability, end of life, reproductive choice, unwanted pregnancy, infertility, gender identity and sexual orientation – all are part of day to day medical practice. Philosophical techniques, critical thinking and being comfortable with complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty allows me step back and take a neutral, problem solving approach and to help clients navigate and accept uncertainty."

- Belinda Prakoff obtained a PhD in philosophy of music from the University of Melbourne. Her work has included graduate research administration and working as a professional opera singer. According to her:
  "I can understand complex policies and explain them clearly to students and staff. I can write clearly, and I can effectively problem-solve when faced with difficult situations in which students, supervisors and policy may be in conflict."

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY?

- Deloitte access economics found that employers listed problem solving as one of the top five demanded skills for employment.

- A 2015 survey of 1,378 employers by the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand found that employers ranked problem solving as the fifth most important skill that they were looking for.

- According to the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series, the growth rate in the proportion of jobs requesting problem solving skills increased by 26% from 2012-2015.

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CORE SKILLS GAINED IN PHILOSOPHY: GENERIC SKILLS

WHAT DO ACADEMICS SAY?

- According to Balcar:
  "The bulk of skills supporting individual's employability can be found among the so called "soft skills"... which are hard to measure and are closely connected with [individual's] e.g, cooperation, leadership, independence or creativity... The importance of soft skills has increased significantly in the last few decades."

- Graduate Careers Australia reports:
  "(Philosophy) students' satisfaction with their generic skill development is ranked above the average for arts students, with notably higher than average responses."

- According to the 2010 AAP Forward Thinking report:
  "Philosophy students acquire a range of generic skills ... In recent years, labour market shifts have revealed an unexpected new interest by employers in the skills of philosophy students ... In the face of rapid social and technological change, students who have studied Philosophy are more likely to be able to make critical assessments of the factors influencing those changes and to be able to understand and adapt their intellectual responses in light of changed circumstances throughout their working life."
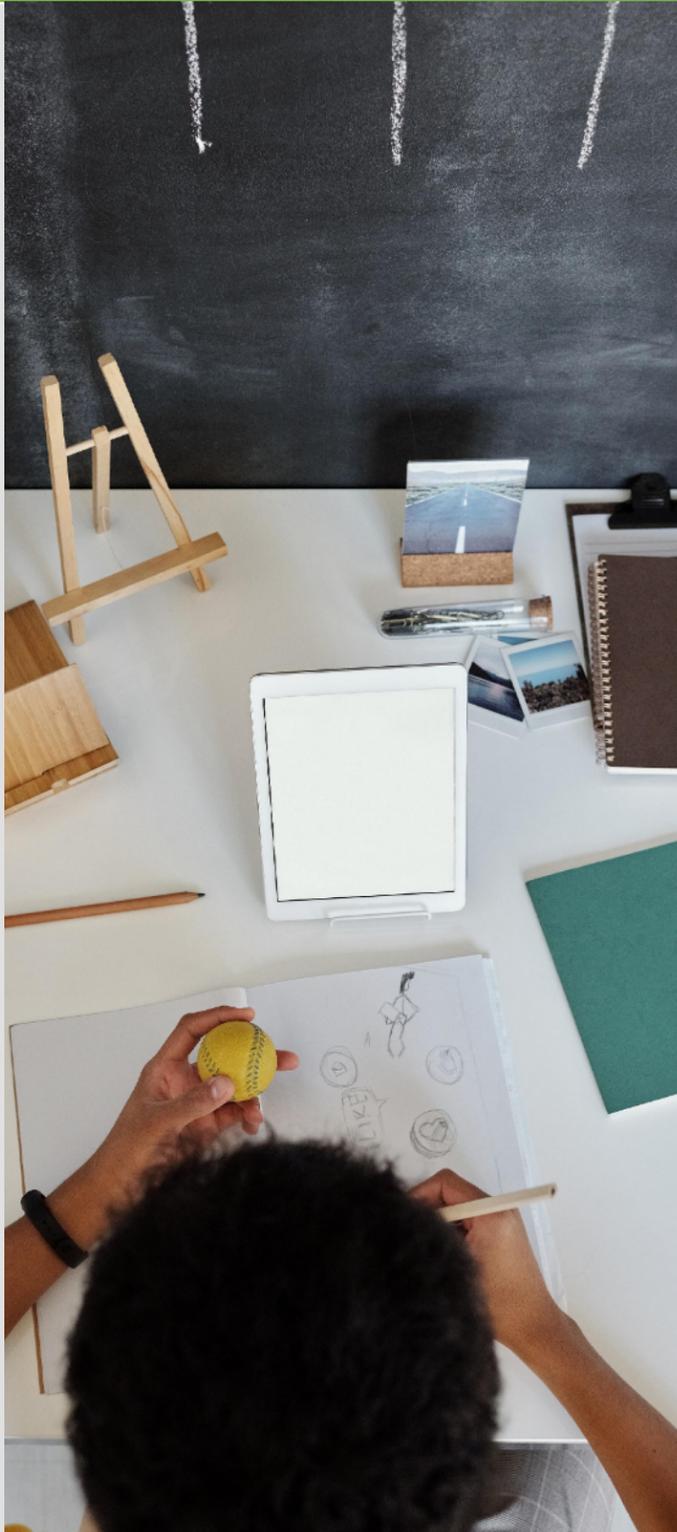
WHAT DO GRADUATES SAY?

- Jacob Pearce completed a PhD in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Melbourne. His career has involved work as a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research. According to him:
  "Some people (and many graduate capability statements) go on a lot about the 'transferrable skills' that you acquire by studying philosophy, but I think this is spot on. I think the three most important 'transferrable skills' I learned that have helped me in my current career are: Clarity of thought, the importance of critique and the importance of scholarship."

- Bruce Sheridan studied philosophy at both undergraduate and graduate level at the University of Auckland. His career has involved work as a filmmaker and screen education strategist. According to him:
  "Philosophy can amplify your abilities in any field that engages your passions. For this reason, I think of it as one of the few deep areas of study that is universally applicable, and its particularly good preparation for complex, collaborative endeavours. Seek out work that interests you and communicate these special and rare qualities most philosophy graduates acquire from a discipline that is intellectually rigorous and infinitely variable."

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS SAY?

- As stated by the 2016 FYA New Work Order report series:
  "Over the past three years, employers have listed more enterprise skills in their job advertisements. As examples, the proportion of job advertisements that demand critical thinking has increased by 158%, creativity by 65%, presentation skills by 25% and team work by 19%." Furthermore, *"employers now request 20% more enterprise skills than technical skills. In an average job advertisement for a young person in 2015, employers requested 3.2 enterprise skills and 2.7 technical skills."*

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