



Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)

Te Hōtaka Mātauranga Whakaaro, Tōrangapū me te Ōhanga

“The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” For political theorist Isaiah Berlin this ancient saying illuminates two intellectual styles. Sometimes in PPE we are like hedgehogs, studying, for example, everything from purchasing to marrying to diplomacy under the model of rational choice. Just as often, though, we are like foxes, using multiple theories to understand a topic like environmental policy or military ethics.

Solve the world's problems

In Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) we prepare students to solve the world's problems by combining the analytical reasoning of philosophy, the social insight of political studies, and the methodological rigour of economics. Students complete a challenging course of study in logic, ethics, collective action, human behaviour, political theory, economics, and the history of ideas. Developed originally at Oxford, our programme in PPE includes a foundation in the classic texts of the human sciences, engagement with the best new ideas about society, and analysis of present-day policy challenges. Today's policy challenges are more complicated than ever, and PPE's interdisciplinary course of study prepares students to meet them.

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Why study PPE?

Students in the Otago PPE programme complete rigorous courses of study in the three core disciplines, in addition to interdisciplinary seminars and original research.

There are natural affinities and common roots among several strands of philosophy, politics, and economics. For example, economics developed from the field of political economy, welfare economics utilises concepts of social justice from philosophy, and the philosophy of science has important implications for methodologies adopted in economics and politics.

The aim of the programme is to give a broader exposure to the range of analytical approaches in these three disciplines than would be gained within any one of the traditional single-discipline majors.

Background required

No special background is required to begin a PPE major. However, a student who has achieved mainly Excellences and Merits in each of the three subjects Economics, English and Mathematics with Calculus or Mathematics with Statistics at NCEA Level 3 may apply to the Department of Economics to enter the second required paper (ECON 112) without completing the first (BSNS 113).

Career opportunities

Graduates with a PPE degree go on to apply their analytical skills in many different fields: recent graduates are working as diplomats, journalists, lawyers, project managers, academics, business executives, entrepreneurs, accountants, and policy analysts.

There are PPE graduates in entertainment, in tourism, and in information technology;

those in government work at the Supreme Court and at the Ministries for the Environment, Treasury, Social Development, and Inland Revenue, among others.

You can find people with Otago PPE degrees in government, industry, academia, and civil society in New Zealand, North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

Student exchange

We encourage PPE majors to participate in student exchange, and many do so. There are twelve universities that offer PPE programmes for exchange with students from Otago, as well as dozens more without formal PPE programmes that offer appropriate course work. You can participate in student exchange while moving forward with your degree and paying domestic fees.

PPE at Otago

The PPE programme was founded in 1999 as the first and largest such course of study in New Zealand, and one of only a few in Australasia. From the beginning PPE has attracted high-achieving students curious about the world and interested in employing their talents in public service.

Students begin in first year with introductory papers in economics, politics, and philosophy, but quickly progress to advanced work in small interdisciplinary seminars. Usually in the second year or the first term of third year, students may participate in student exchange.

The humanities internship practicum, in which students go out into the community to provide research services, is available for second and third year students.

Third year students may pursue supervised independent research on a topic of their choosing by taking the PHPE 301 paper.

Degree options

You can study PPE as a:

- Bachelor of Arts (BA)
- Bachelor of Commerce (BCom)
- Bachelor of Arts and Science (BASc)
- Bachelor of Arts with Honours (BA (Hons))
- Bachelor of Commerce with Honours (BCom (Hons))
- And a one-year Master of Arts (MA).

The PPE major is compatible with double degrees in other subjects such as law or computer science. PPE students can complete double majors and add minor subjects as listed in the Guide to Enrolment.

High achieving students may apply for postgraduate study, which consists of small seminars in each of the core disciplines plus completion of a dissertation.



For more information about
Philosophy, Politics
and Economics
otago.ac.nz/courses/subjects/phpe.html



PROFILE

Mikusha Newdick BA, Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE)

"Although my parents would say (in jest) that I deliberately chose the university farthest from home, I would prefer to say that there was something enticing about the University of Otago: the campus, student culture and the range of different opportunities. I was also fortunate enough to receive a scholarship from the University, which also helped with my decision.

"Much like many people finishing secondary school, I had no idea what I wanted to study at university, but PPE piqued my curiosity. It was different, and I had never heard of it. Admittedly, I think at the time I chose it strategically – "surely I'll like one of the three subject areas?" And surely enough I did.

"In my opinion, university is about how you can learn fundamental skills that can be readily applied when you join the workforce, in whatever capacity that may be. This is precisely what PPE teaches you – how to

fluidly and mindfully switch between different 'hats'. Even when you're looking at the same problem, it teaches you to be aware of how other people, with varying beliefs, backgrounds or education may see it.

"I currently work at the Te Manatū Waka, Ministry of Transport. I began as an intern, then became a Graduate Adviser and now I'm a Policy Adviser. I am still an arms-length away from the University, as I am jointly conducting research on transport access issues for mana whenua and how they are exacerbated by the impacts of sea-level rise.

"The work I am involved in at the Ministry is largely around social policy – thinking about how certain groups may be disproportionately disadvantaged by the impacts of transport policies. PPE taught me the skills to be able to conceptually understand things from different perspectives, which later allowed me to apply that model in my current work."

